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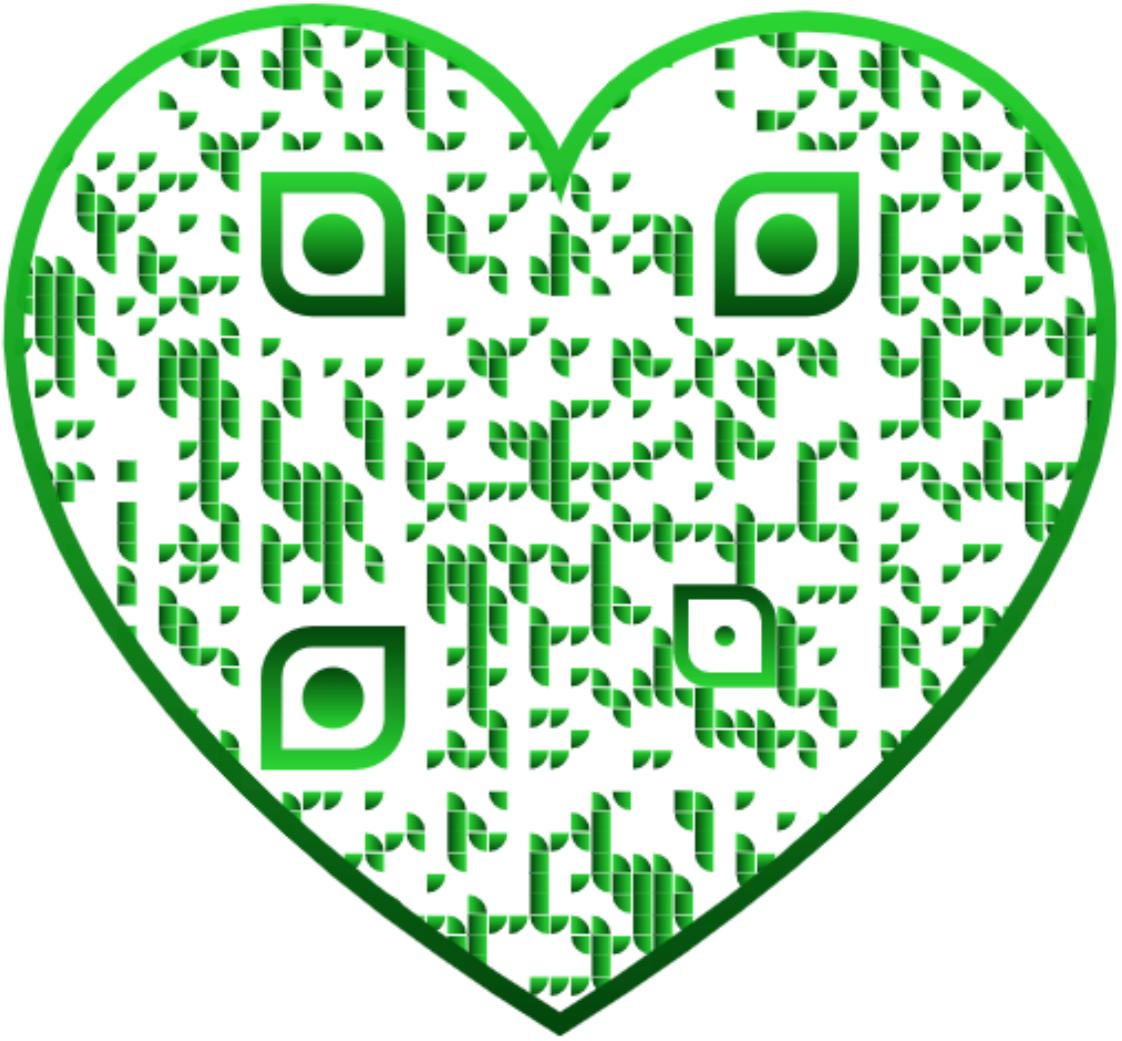

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In bass guitar world, Mark King is a bona fide hero, no matter where you personally stand on slap bass or the music of Level 42. The guy has done so much to advance the cause of our instrument, whether through techniques or simply by placing it at the forefront of a huge-selling band's sound, that we all owe him a debt of gratitude to some degree. After almost four decades in the public eye, we'd forgive King if he decided to sit back and take it easy – he's earned it several times over – but no, he's gone and formed a new, super-musical group with three of his most accomplished contemporaries. We meet the maestro as he welcomes us into the Gizmodrome.

Elsewhere, we get up close and personal with the bassists from the hottest bands on the planet – PVRIS and Queens Of The Stone Age – hang out with punk legend Paul Gray and Italian experimentalist Lorenzo Feliciati, and head to Yamaha's Milan HQ for a first look at their new BB bass series. Gear-wise, we review five very different bass guitars, from the super-affordable (£187 for a bass! yep, you read that right) to the accountant-terrifyingly pricey – and we offer you the best bass tuition on the planet from our world-class educators Steve Lawson, Stuart Clayton and Phil Mann. All of bass life is here.

Before I let you go, make sure you visit page 42 to find out how you can take part in our special 150th issue, coming out in November. Vote in our two epic polls and you'll be in with a chance of nabbing some very tasty bass gear. See you next month!

Joel McIver, editor

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THE LOW DOWN

News and views from the bass world, collated by *BGM*'s team of intrepid newshounds

CHEZ SHEZ

The splendid Shez Raja, one of the stars of this year's London Bass Guitar Show, will be playing a variety of UK venues in September. Special guests include guitarist John Etheridge (Soft Machine, Nigel Kennedy), trombonist Dennis Rollins (Jamiroquai, Maceo Parker) and award-winning saxophonist and MC Soweto Kinch. He'll also be running his acclaimed Inspiration and Creativity Masterclass, debuted at the LBGS, at both the Clapham and Guildford campuses of the Academy of Contemporary Music. Catch him on 31 August (606 Club, London, featuring John Etheridge), 2 September (Wall2Wall Festival in Abergavenny, featuring Dennis Rollins), 6 September (ACM Guildford), 7 September (Birmingham Pizza Express, featuring Soweto Kinch), 21 September (ACM London) and 15 October (Islington Assembly Hall, featuring Jay Phelps, supporting Damien Escobar).

www.shezraja.com

NAMM TOUR

Another Summer NAMM 2017 has come and gone, and according to our spies in the Nashville hood, it was quite the occasion for bass players, kicking off with Metallica guitarist Kirk Hammett and his pedal company, KHDK Electronics, which has just launched its first bass effects unit, the Abyss (now that's a heavy metal name). This tasty bit of kit, whose UK price tag is yet to be confirmed by its distributor Zoom Corporation of Hertfordshire, has been endorsed by headbangers of the calibre of Tool's Justin Chancellor, Anthrax's Frank Bello and Slipknot's Alessandro 'V-Man' Venturella, who can be seen on Youtube demoing the gizmo. The Abyss offers dirty and clean channel volumes, for precision blending akin to using two amps, gain and treble knobs, plus a lo/hi gain toggle switch.

Amptweaker have unveiled Junior versions of its TightFuzz and BluesFuzz pedals, in both guitar and bass incarnations. Each pedal includes a fat/normal/tight attack switch, as well as tone, volume and fuzz controls. Bass versions of each pedal offer a dry low knob to blend clean tone with distortion. All pedals run on 9V to 18V batteries or power supplies and offer true bypass switching. The Bass TightFuzz Jr and Bass BlueFuzz Jr ($180 each) will land in the UK later this year.

Guild announced a bass version of their Jumbo Junior six-string acoustic with a 23.75" scale, D'Addario EXP Short Scale strings, a solid Sitka spruce top, flamed maple back and sides, and a Guild AP-1 Active piezo pickup. The Jumbo Junior Bass will set you back a fairly steep $695: make sure you get a hard case and hide it from any jealous acoustic guitarists in your band.

Beck bassist Justin Meldal-Johnsen, who plays a 1967 Fender Mustang, has been given a signature four-string by the big F company. Modelled after his vintage Daphne Blue instrument, the limited edition JMJ Road Worn Mustang comes with a custom split-coil pickup and a weeny 30" scale which will be perfect for those with hands of the small to medium variety.

Boss are bringing out a new multi-FX unit called the GT-1B Bass Effects Processor. Whatever your thoughts on stompboxes with multiple effects, and we know a few purists who wouldn't be seen near one, this £209-rated bit of kit offers a lot of functionality. Bass effects include a limiter and distortion, a graphic EQ, T-Wah, Harmonist, Bass Synth, Defretter and more, all powered by four AA batteries (you'd better have plenty of spares if it's a long gig) or a power supply. It also offers connection to USB for easy recording with a DAW.

SHOP TALK

A new feature in which we meet a renowned bass-maker.

Luthier Sander De Gier discusses his latest work with Hywel Davies

Pic by Will Ireland

"It must have been about 20 years ago. I started making both guitars and basses because I loved it so much. I used to work for another guitar maker and when I walked into his shop I immediately fell in love with it and I never stopped doing it. It's my passion," reminisces the Dutch luthier Sander De Gier.

Establishing themselves as one of the most respected companies in the European bass community, De Gier Guitars And Basses have been hand-making some truly exquisite instruments since 1995. "I'm actually quite proud of them all," he says, "but I think I'm most proud of my 70s version of my Be-Bop model. I developed it with a Fender client and it has a unique preamp. You get a great passive sound – it was designed to give you an instant vintage Marcus Miller tone."

He adds: "I started making Jazz basses about four or five years ago, because people were always asking me, 'When are you going to make a Jazz bass?' I used to say, 'Oh, I'm not going to do that,' because I had my other models. I thought that there were enough Jazz basses in the world, but people kept asking me for a Jazz, so why say no to them? So I built a prototype of my Jazz, but putting some of my own experience into it. I met Marcus Miller at the North Sea Jazz Festival and said to him, 'Would you like to try it?' He picked one up and kept playing it for about 30 minutes, and he said, 'I'll take it!' The next day, Richard Bona ordered the second prototype and when people started to get to know me I was flooded with orders."

Hand-crafted to perfection, his range extends across six model types including the Soulmate, Be-Bop, Elevation, Origin and the aforementioned Be-Bop 70s basses, all using a variety of timbers. "I like to work with as many different woods as possible," he says. "I have one that is simply called black wood: I sometimes use that for fingerboards. It's like a mixture of rosewood and ebony. Now, with the new rosewood CITES laws, everybody is looking for alternatives and I used to use ziricote a lot, so I'm thinking of doing that again.

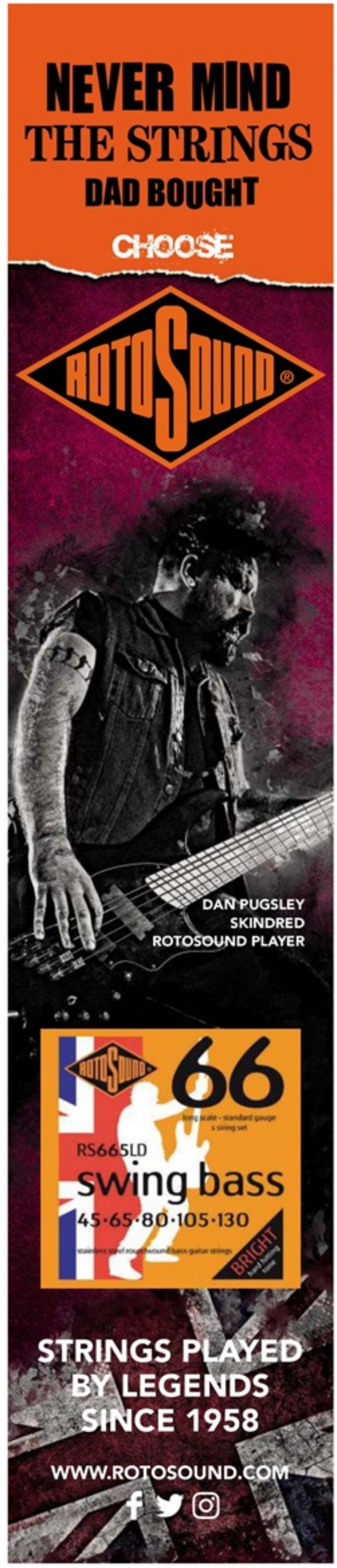
"I'm thinking of working on two minor models: one would be in a Thunderbird style. However, the question would be, could I make a Thunderbird which isn't so top-heavy? I'm thinking of a way to get that to work, which will take time. The other thing I'm experimenting with is making a bass that's like a Gretsch White Falcon guitar – but a bass, which will be interesting."

www.degierguitars.com

HUNTER GATHERERS

A new, vintage-styled bass called the Huntington has arrived courtesy of luthiers Supro, and if you're a fan of early-60s guitar designs, you're in for a treat. It has a 30" scale – why are so many short-scale basses appearing this month? – vintage-accurate passive electronics and 'Gold Foil' pickups that are said to be authentic replicas of the original Clear-Tone pickups found in the vintage Supro Violin, Taurus and Pocket Bass models. The Huntington bass is available in single, double and triple-pickup configurations with an optional piezo bridge, which sounds like a lot of tone options to us. According to Supro, "the sound of the Huntington bass is astoundingly large, boasting a tight, confident, buttery low end, articulate midrange and crisp highs", so we're looking forward to reviewing it. Expect to pay between $999 and $1299 for one, depending on pickup configuration.

http://suprousa.com



Win

Win an Orange Kongpressor worth £119 by answering this simple question!

Which of these bassists has a signature Orange amp called an MK3?

A Victor Wooten
B Glenn Hughes
C Michael Manring

Answers to https://goo.gl/zRJ9Li by September 27.

'WICK-ED

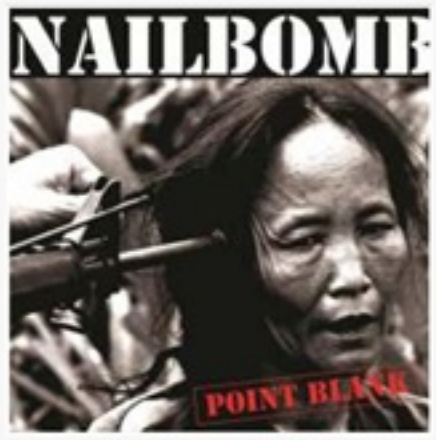
Thirty-five years old this month (damn – now we feel old!), German luthiers Warwick are celebrating with four new basses. Four- and five-string versions of the Masterbuilt Thumb NT, plus a four and five of their Teambuilt Pro Series Thumb, will be available in quantities of no more than 50 and 100 respectively. Expect to pay between £2500 and £5800 for these limited-edition instruments. The former feature a dry aged mahogany body back, a neck-through, ultra-thin wenge neck with maple stripes and a marbled tiger stripe ebony fretboard with abalone dots, a highly figured maple burl top, a matching headstock, gold hardware and two active EMG pickups, controlled by two-band MEC electronics, itself a replica of the 1984 original. The Teambuilt Pro Series Thumbs feature a bolt-on neck join, a mahogany and maple burl body, a wenge neck, active MEC pickups and electronics.

www.warwick.de

REVOLVER

Every month we tell you the bass-line we can't stop listening to

THIS MONTH: Nailbomb, 'Wasting Away' (1994)



It's not all elegant jazz noodling and eight-finger tapping in 7/4 around these parts, you know: occasionally the *BGM* bunker reverberates to the sound of hardcore and metal, despite the old age and bad backs of the staff. Nailbomb, a short-lived side project led by Sepultura singer Max Cavalera and Fudge Tunnel guitarist Alex Newport, released a single album called *Point Blank* in '94. One of the headbangers (who knows which, they were a fairly impromptu bunch) recorded an excellent, super-overdriven bass part on the opening cut, 'Wasting Away'. It's a simple four-note riff that a child could play, but that never stopped Nirvana, eh?

BASSWATCH

Every month, keen bass-spotter Ray Walker brings us an online bargain.

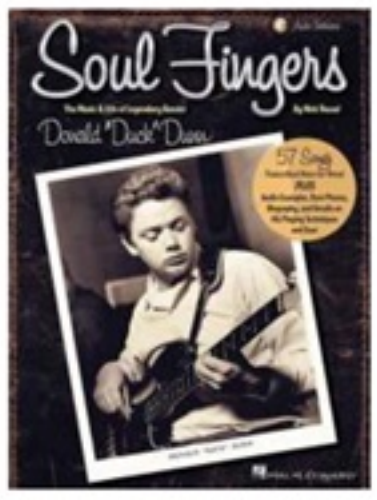
Stambaugh Ampeg AEB-1 copy £1,894
https://tinyurl.com/ycahxfva

This is the unique Stambaugh Ampeg AEB-1-type bass. With its eyecatching F-holes, this beauty boasts an African mahogany body with bloodwood facing. The neck is maple with a morado fretboard with maple binding. It comes with a Bartolini P-Bass pickup which, apparently, has a shorter sustain than the typical split-coil. The 'mystery' bridge pickup was designed by Mike Smyth at MJS pickups and was based on the original Ampeg Devil bass pickup. Plenty of tonal options there. 'F' it – you know you want it.

THE DUNN THING

A new book, *Soul Fingers: The Music & Life Of Legendary Bassist* *Donald 'Duck' Dunn* (Hal Leonard, $24.99) is on the way, written by bassist and researcher Nick Rosaci and featuring an introduction by Dan Aykroyd. The career of the legendary bassist for the Stax-Volt studios in Memphis is presented in full detail, complete with rare photos, stories, gear info and note-for-note transcriptions of nearly 60 bass-lines. The book also includes online access to over an hour of audio demonstrations and play-alongs, featuring guest appearances by Duck's son Jeff Dunn and Will Lee, using Duck's actual bass.

http://duckdunnremembered.com/wp/



THE MU

The Musicians' Union implores musicians to take action to ensure free movement in the EU post-Brexit

The Musicians' Union (MU) is campaigning for musicians' right to travel freely and easily in the European Union (EU). We know it is an issue virtually all MU members care about – touring in Europe is an important source of income. To make the case for it, we need your help.

Why free movement matters

Since the Brexit referendum in 2016, the MU has been consulting members and working closely with the Trades Union Congress (TUC), music industry umbrella body UK Music, Members of Parliament and the House of Lords on how we can protect musicians' careers.

One issue that keeps coming up is the right to travel freely across Europe without extra cost or red tape.

The possible introduction of work permissions and/or visas for British musicians touring and working in Europe could be extremely detrimental. The EU provides performers and composers access to music markets across Europe including France, Germany and Italy. Free movement means musicians can perform one-off gigs and tours in the EU – work routinely offered to freelance players. And musicians can easily be working in several different European countries over the course of a few days.

Any restriction on free movement can easily put musicians' whole livelihoods at risk. That's why we need your help to protect it.

Ask your MP to sign the pledge

Ask your MP to sign the MU's pledge to protect easy travel for all musicians.

> "ANY RESTRICTION ON FREE MOVEMENT CAN EASILY PUT MUSICIANS' WHOLE LIVELIHOODS AT RISK"

The pledge reads, "I pledge to support professional musicians and performers in my constituency, and to do all that I can to ensure they can continue to be able to travel easily across Europe post-Brexit for time-limited activities such as touring and performing with minimum administrative burdens."

You can find the pledge – and how MPs can sign it – via theMU.org/Brexit.

Not sure how to contact your MP? It's easy – you can find and email your MP via Write To Them (writetothem.com).

Share your #WorkingInTheEU stories

As well as encouraging MPs to sign the pledge, we want to show them what free movement in Europe means for musicians. That's why we want you to share your experiences, photos and favourite moments performing in the EU across social media using the hashtag #WorkingInTheEU.

Find out more

Free movement for musicians is just one our five key Brexit issues. Find out more via our Brexit hub, theMU.org/Brexit. You can also find out more from your MU Regional Office – get in touch via theMU.org.

BASSICALLY SPEAKING

Bassists reveal the tricks of their trade faster than a snapping D string

GEAR
BASSES Fender Precision
EFFECTS Colorsound Tonebender
AMPS JMI 100, Ampeg B15 Portaflex

LEWIS WHARTON LITTLE BARRIE

I tend to play a lot higher up the neck, but on the low strings, on Little Barrie stuff, I like the way it sounds fatter than the same notes on the higher strings. Playing nearer the register of the guitar can give things more punch, which works for us, being a three-piece. Almost all the music I like and am interested in playing has been played on a four-string bass, I have never thought 'If only I had more strings, this song would sound so much better'. It's not that I'm against it: when I was 16 and first heard Primus with Les Claypool being really creative with a six-string I thought that was great – but at the same time you have Mark Sandman from Morphine sounding great on a two-string bass. I suppose I associate basses with more than four strings with music that is more focused on technical displays than a well-composed song. Each to their own. The secret of playing bass well is not over-playing, but playing for the song. I've never really been interested in playing super-fast or super-technically. My bass heroes are James Jamerson, Paul Simonon, Andy Fraser and John Paul Jones. I also really like Daniel Foder of the Budos Band and the players that work with Charles Bradley, Vince Chiarito and Nick Movshon. Always remember that you are absolutely unique... just like everyone else. We have a new album out called *Death Express*.

www.littlebarrie.com

GEAR
BASSES HJC Customs JJS, Yamaha BB415
EFFECTS Roland Cube 60XL amp: Drive, Chorus, Poly Octave, Delay, Reverb (room or plate), looper
AMPS Carvin Pro Bass 500, Roland Cube 60XL

SELINA 'THE FOX' METOXEN

EX-THE MUSIC THERAPY EXPERIMENT

I don't think I have any particular style of playing. I like to experiment with different techniques, but I'm more of a pocket player in a band or recording situation. A listener once told me that I reminded him of John Entwistle, but then again, I was also told by someone else that I reminded him of Nathan East! Those are two totally different styles at opposite ends of the spectrum. I like to explore and have fun, but I also keep in mind that no matter what I'm doing, I must always do what serves the song. That is a key function of the bass player. The secret of playing bass well is good-quality practice. You can practise a lot, but if you practise playing sloppy, you will just get better at playing sloppy. When playing, it is good to focus on articulation, tone, ergonomics and efficiency – although efficiency can take a back seat if the tone you're looking for is not in a specific area on the neck. It's also good to practise playing with a clean tone, even if the song has distortion or effects, because they tend to hide any imperfections. The main focus is to always be aware of everything that is being carried out on the bass, and to pay careful attention to detail. My first bass was a Fender Squier that I got back in 1996. I ended up getting rid of it because I really didn't play much; I guess I wasn't ready then. It wasn't until 2012 that I got serious about playing, so I bought an Epiphone P-Bass. My favourite bass ever to date is my HJC Custom. It has double reverse Precision pickups and a Nordstrand 3B five-knob preamp. One bassist described its tone as sounding like 'God riding an angry elephant'! Since my nickname is 'The Fox', I had a custom fox inlay put on the third fret: my signature, with a fox doodle, is on the headstock. My bass heroes are Victor Wooten – not just because he's a great player but also because he's a remarkable human being. Also, there's Yolanda Charles, who indirectly inspired me to learn how to play the bass and sing at the same time, while Victor directly helped me to make it happen. Some of my other bass heroes are Nathan East, Billy Sheehan, Leland Sklar and Michael Manring. We each have our favourites and, the "greatest bass player" is an opinion based on each individual's perspective. To me, it would have to be the child who sees a 'great', is inspired by them and, as a result of it, becomes great themselves. When they grow up and become great, there will be a child out there who will look up to them as their greatest and the cycle will continue.

www.facebook.com/salinametoxen

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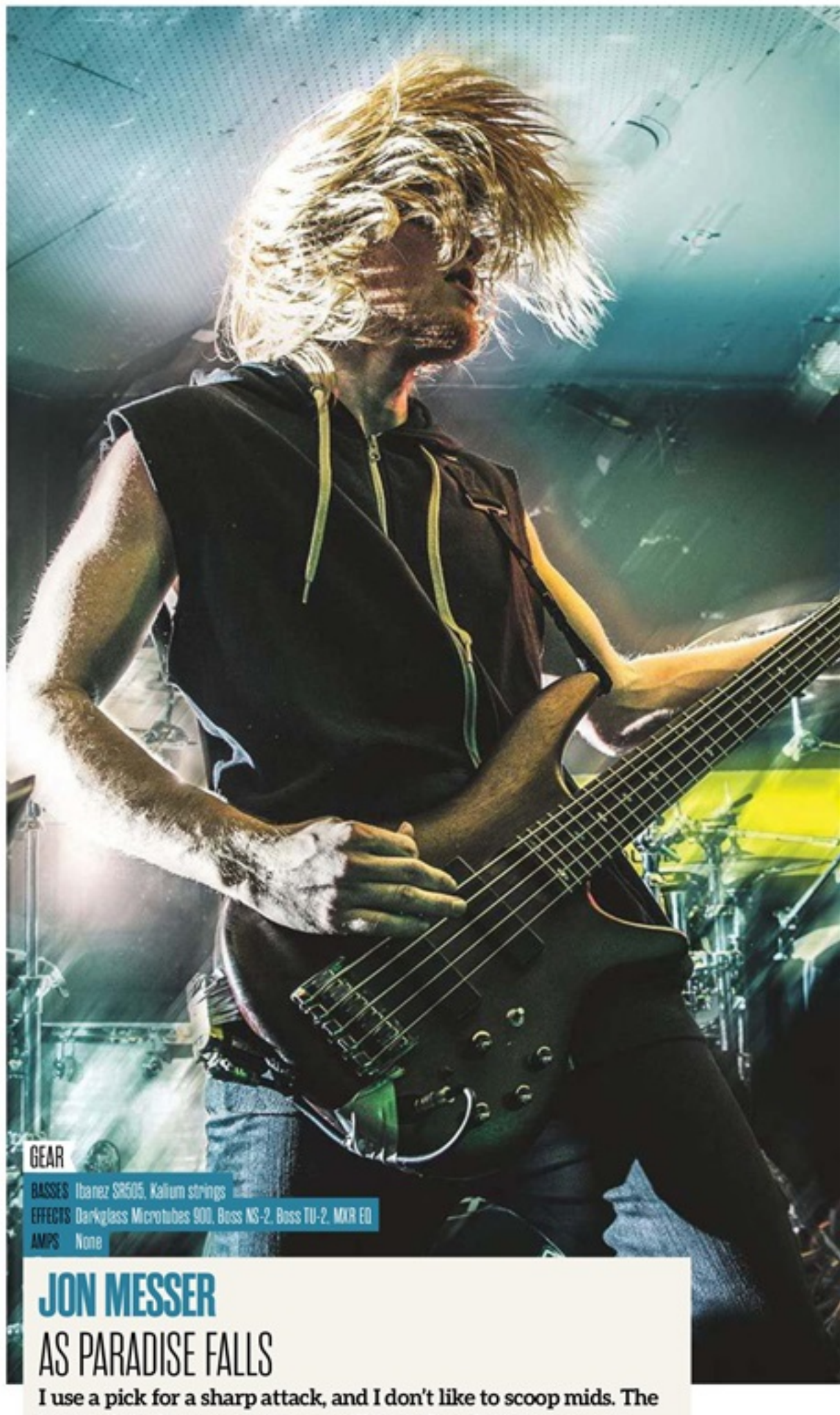
GEAR
BASSES Elrick NJS4, Fender Precision, Gretsch Country Gentleman
EFFECTS Dunlop Bass Wah, T-Rex Bass Juice, Roland SY300, EHX POG 2
AMPS Aguilar Tone Hammer 500, Aguilar SLL112

DRIES LAHEYE STUFF

I love playing different styles with wonky beats and in odd meters, but also more open stuff that implies time but doesn't necessarily make sense metrically. I learned to play the bass with my fingers, and still do most of the time. Sometimes I use a plectrum when the tune asks for it. I studied jazz at a conservatory and play a lot of improvised music. In most of my bands there are sub-frequency synthesisers playing under me, but it's fun to play in between: I take the name 'bass guitar' quite literally. I slap a little sometimes because it's fun and dirty. I'm no slap pro though: I don't really like that sound, but the occasional slap can be quite nice. It's a technique that expands your vocabulary. The secret of playing bass well is putting in a lot of work and passion, as with any instrument. Be the foundation of the groove and harmony, but dare to change things up and make it dirty and alive. Enjoy the friction with the drums and sing with your instrument. My first bass was a very bad one that didn't even have a brand name. After some years of messing around with that bass I traded it in for my trusted 1987 Fender Precision. After a few years I mounted a Seymour Duncan Hot Rod on there and it has been my main bass for most of my career. I recently switched to a modern Elrick New Jazz Standard which I love: the Precision was getting too heavy for me, and the Elrick plays so fluently while still having grit. The greatest bass player that ever lived was Jaco Pastorius. He's just an overall badass who changed the world and wrote beautiful music. We're currently releasing our second album, *Old Dreams New Planets*, playing clubs and festivals mainly in Belgium, Netherlands and the UK.

www.stuffisthebandname.com



GEAR
BASSES Ibanez SR505, Kalium strings
EFFECTS Darkglass Microtubes 900, Boss NS-2, Boss TU-2, MXR EQ
AMPS None

JON MESSER AS PARADISE FALLS

I use a pick for a sharp attack, and I don't like to scoop mids. The low end is a big part of our overall sound, and we never stop looking for ways to better fill the spectrum. I play a five-string bass because I like having the extra option of the fifth string and it feels much more natural to my hand than a four-string does. I tune mine (low to high) AEADG with heavy-gauge Kalium strings to keep the low A tight. Slap is something I've only recently began working on by watching players such as Amos Williams use it along with other percussive things, and it's interesting to say the least. Expect some slap in future material. There is so much to learn within so many different styles on bass. With the current age of information and music streaming we have constant access to new music and hours upon hours of tutorials on technique, gear and literally anything else. Seek, learn and practice. My bass heroes? It would have to be between Simon Grove and Amos Williams. Seeing Simon play for the first time really inspired me to improve my right hand; I thought it was impossible to be that tight without a pick. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose The Helix Nebula's *Meridian*, although Defeater's *Lost Ground* has a great gritty tone as well. Our single, 'Starblind', is available now via iTunes and Spotify.

www.asparadisefalls.com

GEAR

BASSES Overwater Custom J5, Musicman Stingray 5, Fender Jazz Deluxe, Fender Precision Standard, Jaydee GA24
EFFECTS EBS Multicomp, Multidrive, Octabass, UniChorus and BassID, MXR Phase 90, Radial Bassbone DI
AMPS Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 and cabs, Markbass Little Mark 3 and cabs

ANDY PALMER

Subject to what genre I'm playing and who I'm playing with, I have to make my bass playing tasteful and fitting for the song: it's all about the song, every time. I play five-string bass because of its versatility and practical ease of scale use, and because you don't need to keep detuning. I have an Overwater J5 Custom which is my go-to bass, and I also have a Stingray 5. However, I will never get tired of using a four-string. My first bass was a right-handed Eros, a Gibson EB-3 copy, that my Mum bought for me for £30 second-hand when I was about 13. I'm a lefty, so of course I played it upside down. In my early days I did a lot of pick playing, and my forearm would be forever adjusting my volume and tone pots. I

"THE GREATEST BASS PLAYER THAT EVER LIVED? THERE ARE THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US, LIKE JAMES JAMERSON AND JACO PASTORIUS, WHO SET THE BAR"

couldn't afford anything else at that time, so I had to get on with it. My bass heroes are Geddy Lee and Billy Sheehan: those guys were my first influences as a young player. The greatest bass player that ever lived? There are those who have gone before us, like James Jamerson and Jaco Pastorius, who set the bar. Then you have our current greats – the likes of Laurence Cottle, Federico Malaman and Hadrien Feraud, among many others – who are amazing. Then we have our ones to watch, the young guns: there are some truly stunning young players coming through right now, which is fabulous to see – for example Henrik Linder and Bill Banwell. My sincere thanks must go out to Overwater, Aguilar, Elixir, FM cables, EBS effects and Ashdown Engineering.

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GEAR

BASSES 1960 Kay Swingmaster, 1948 Czech Plywood, K&K Bass Max pickup
EFFECTS None
AMPS Markbass CMD 151 combo

KEN SMITH THE JIVE ACES

My bass style is a driving, swinging yet simple upright bass style, in the mould of the early jazz and swing players from the 30s and 40s that lasted through to the cats of the rock'n'roll era in the mid 50s. I play in the groove with the drums and piano as part of a rhythm section, or thump out the bass-line, driving the band along when slapping. I have never touched an electric bass in my life and only once played a five-string upright. Once, in New York, the gig provided me with a five-string with a high C without me knowing and I had very little time to practise with it before going on stage. I kept plucking the wrong string, which made it tough on the gig but kept me on my toes. All my solos are slapped: I have always felt that the sound of a bull fiddle being slapped – especially triple slaps – is one of the most exciting sounds in music. It was that sound I heard on recordings by Bill Black with Elvis (1954-58) and Marshall Lytle with Bill Haley (1952-55) that turned me on to the bass as a kid. Listen to the masters of the style you want to play and go out and play as much as you can. When playing in a group, listen to the other members of the rhythm section and fit with them in the groove. Timing and pitch are very important, and practising with a metronome and tuner is a must. I love any Kay model made in the US between 1937 and 1960. I have two, a 1952 M1 and a 1960 Blond Swing Master. The Kay basses have a nice thin neck, which makes them the easiest stand-up to play and they have a great tone for a plywood instrument, plus they are simply lovely to look at. This makes them a sought-after bull fiddle by swing and rockabilly players. The greatest bass player that ever lived, to me, was Milt Hinton. From his years with Cab Calloway (1936-1950) in the big band era to his session work throughout the 1950s and 60s, he played with the bow, pizzicato and slapped, as featured on the Calloway 1939 recording of 'Pluckin' The Bass', one of the best demonstrations of double and triple slapping ever laid down on record. He was much in demand and performed with all the Jazz R&B greats and even toured with Bing Crosby. The Jive Aces celebrate 20 years with the same bandmembers this year, and to mark the anniversary we are releasing two albums, *Diggin' The Roots Vol.1: Rockin' Rhythm & Blues* and *Vol. 2: Hot Jazz*.

www.jiveaces.com

PLAYERS SCHOOL

A view of bass from a non-bassist's point of view, courtesy of the Players School in Florida. This month: Phil Magallanes, pianist with Arturo Sandoval, Al Di Meola and others

Greetings to all you low-enders out there! As a keyboardist and bandleader, I always prefer working with confident, unselfish bass players who put the music first and strive to make everyone in the band sound better. I always fully appreciate when a bass player has chops and harmonic and rhythmic knowledge, because the music can go further when these things are present.

However, the most important qualities a bass player can possess are great time, good ears, a good sound and a willingness to unselfishly do whatever it takes to make the music feel good. Those are the main things I look for in a bass player. If you have all of the above and can solo like Michael Brecker on top of that, great! But just realise that most people will hire you for your bass playing, not your soloing.

Bass players have tremendous musical power over the direction and feel of the music, because the bass dictates both the rhythm and the harmony. Bass is usually what makes everybody dance, and every note the bass player chooses to play – or not play – can have a profound effect on what everyone in the band plays next. In addition, bass players are not allowed to make mistakes! It's critical that the bass player knows his or her role in the music at hand.

Every musical situation is different, but ultimately it's all about making the music feel good. In order to do so, in addition to being proficient on the bass itself, you also must do a lot of listening and thoroughly absorb the history and vocabulary of the music you want to play. Every genre has a long list of great bass players you absolutely must check out in order to be able to play the music authentically and with authority. This generally takes years to accomplish, and is truthfully a lifelong process. Transcribing can greatly accelerate the learning curve though, so it's definitely a good idea to learn how to read music and transcribe the players you dig as much as you can.

Of course, being around great musicians is ultimately the best way to learn. Find a teacher who can show you what you want to learn and make it a point to catch as much quality live music as you can. Above all, try to play with the best musicians you can. While it's certainly possible to acquire a degree of musical language and skill from books and practising at home, you can't learn how to play with other musicians and develop your ability to 'hang' until you get out there and just do it as much as you can.

On a jazz, Latin or fusion gig, you often have latitude to play more, with a more conversational approach... as long as everyone in the band is listening and it's swinging. On a rock, pop, country, singer-songwriter or R&B gig, it's all about supporting the song. There are likely to be specific lines which need to be played consistently and with conviction. It's easy to get bored and yield to the temptation to play a fill every four, eight or 16 measures. Don't fall into that trap! These genres require a surprising amount of discipline, patience and restraint to play them well. Be one of the few bass players who can truly do this and enjoy it.

Good luck and keep the music fires burning bright!

http://playerschool.edu
Contact: Vicky Fulop Berlin, vfberlin@playerschool.edu

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4 String Basses

15278 - Bass Collection Jive Bass Black n Blocks
13994 - Bass Collection Portrait Fretless Bass
15510 - Bass Collection Rhythm Stick, Sunburst
10067 - Brian May Bass in Cherry with Gig Bag

Cort

14315 - Cort Action 4 String Bass, Black
16156 - Cort Action PJ OPB, Open Pore Black
16323 - Cort Action 4 String Lefty, Black
10111 - Cort GB74 4 String Bass in Natural
15242 - Cort Jeff Berlin Rithimic 5 String Bass

Fender

14643 - Fender Am Dlx Dimension Bass IV Cayenne
15830 - Fender American Pro Jazz Bass, Sunburst
15951 - Fender American Pro P Bass Olympic White
15354 - Fender American Vintage '74 Jazz Bass
15529 - Fender Deluxe Dimension Bass IV, ACBurst
15533 - Fender Flea Jazz Bass, Shell Pink
15847 - Fender Mustang Bass PJ, Olympic White
15686 - Fender Mustang Bass PJ, Sonic Blue
16127 - Fender Precision Partscaster, Secondhand
8929 - Fender Roger Waters Precision Bass
16296 - Fender Special Ed. Noir Precision Bass
16263 - Fender Standard P Bass, Brown Sunburst
16303 - Fender Std Prec. Bass, Candy Apple Red
15266 - G & L Tribute Series M2000, Sunburst
11069 - G&L Tribute L2000 4 String In Blueburst

Gibson

9207 - Gibson SG Bass Guitar Worn Ebony Faded

MUSIC MAN

16236 - MusicMan Caprice, Heritage Tobacco Burst
16149 - MusicMan Stingray 4 Bass with 3 EQ Black
15941 - Musicman Cutlass Bass, Heritage TobBurst

ORANGE

15107 - Orange O Bass, Off-Black

Spector

11197 - Spector Bass Performer 4, Red
16270 - Spector Coda Pro 4 Natural Stain
14105 - Spector Legend Standard 4 Blue Stain
16175 - Squier Bronco Bass, Black
16151 - Squier Bronco Bass, Torino Red
15675 - Squier Vint Mod Jazz Bass 70s, CAR
16144 - Squier Jazz Bass Pack Black & Fender Amp
15890 - Tokai Jazz Sound Bass, Secondhand
14778 - Vintage ICON V74MR Fretless, Sunburst

WestCoast

6446 - Westcoast BG4 Neck Thru Body, Brown
8437 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Trans Red

YAMAHA

14836 - Yamaha 2024 Bass, Sunburst, Secondhand
5634 - Yamaha BB714BS Billy Sheehan, Lava Red
15998 - Yamaha TRBX204 4-String Bass, OVSunburst
15997 - Yamaha TRBX204 4-String Electric Bass
15996 - Yamaha TRBX204 4-String Bass, Black
13138 - Yamaha TRBX304 4 String Bass In White
15999 - Yamaha TRBX504 Bass, Trans White

5 String Basses

15983 - Fender American Pro Jazz Bass V, Black
15363 - Cort A5 Ultra Artisan 5-String Bass, Nat
15725 - Cort Action DLX 5 FGB Faded Grey Burst
14312 - Cort Action V-DLX, Cherry Red Sunburst
12538 - Cort GB75 5 String Bass, Open Pore Nat

Fender

15844 - Fender 5-String Jazz Bass, Blue, Used
15530 - Fender Deluxe Active Jazz Bass V, Black
13117 - Fender Deluxe Dimension Bass V Natural
15265 - G&L Tribute L2500 5 String, Blueburst
16180 - Ibanez BTB5 Trans Black, Secondhand
15407 - Marleaux Contra 5, Old Violin Finish
16288 - Overwater Progress Deluxe 5, Pre-Owned
10960 - Pedulla Rapture Fretted 5-String Bass
16120 - Shuker Horn Bass, Trans Turqoise, Used
15343 - Spector Bass Legend 5 Custom Bubinga
16329 - Spector Coda 5 Pro Black Cherry Stain
12406 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Amber
11195 - Spector SP5BK Performer 5 in Black
15797 - Squier Deluxe Dimension Bass V, Sunburst
9351 - Yamaha BB425 5 String Bass, Black, Used
13193 - Yamaha TRB1005J Bass, Black
16000 - Yamaha TRBX505 Bass

Acoustic Basses

15234 - Fender Kingman Bass SCE with Case
10498 - Ortega D Walker Acoustic Bass, Black
15771 - Ortega D Walker Acoustic Bass, M'ogany
15117 - Takamine GB30CE ElectroAcoustic,Blck
14263 - Takamine GB72CE Jumbo Cutaway

Electric Upright Basses

4910 - Bridge Cetus Electric Double Bass
5110 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
14482 - NS Design NXT Electric Double, Black
6360 - Yamaha SLB200 Silent Double Bass

Fretless Basses

13371 - Squier Vintage Modified Fretless Bass
5719 - Squier Vint Mod 4 Fretless Jazz
14778 - Vintage ICON V74MR Fretless, Sunburst

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2 Sets of Rotosound (4 String) £25 inc P&P
2 Sets of Rotosound (5 String) £30 inc P&P
2 Sets of D'Addario (4 String) £35 inc P&P
2 Sets of D'Addario (4 String) £40 inc P&P

Bass Combos

13577 - AER Amp III Bass Amp Combo
5627 - AER Amp One (200W, 1x10)

Ashdown

15190 - Ashdown AAA 30 8 30w 1 x 8" Combo
15187 - Ashdown AAA 300 210T 300w 2 x 10"
15189 - Ashdown AAA 60 10T 60w 1 x 10" Combo
15953 - Ashdown ABM410 Bass Combo, S-hand
8714 - Ashdown After Eight 20 Bass Combo
15192 - Ashdown B-Social Bass Amp with BT
8750 - Ashdown Perfect Ten Bass Combo
15182 - Ashdown RM C112T 500 EVO 500w 1x12
15180 - Ashdown RMC115T 500 500w 1x15 Bass
15181 - Ashdown RMC210T500 EVO 500w 2x10"
13905 - Blackstar ID Core BEAM Bluetooth Amp

EDEN

12431 - Eden EC210 2 x 10 Bass Amp Combo
13375 - Eden EC28 Bass Amp Combo
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13704 - Eden EM275 Stereo Bass Amp Combo
16046 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo
16028 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo

Fender

12686 - Fender Bronco 40 Bass Amp
13497 - Fender Rumble 100 Bass Amp Combo
4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
12745 - Fender Rumble 200 Bass Combo
15113 - Fender Rumble 25 Bass Amp Combo
13083 - Fender Rumble 40 Bass Amp Combo
15114 - Fender Rumble 500 Bass Amp Combo

Hartke

14095 - Hartke HD150 Bass Combo
9279 - Hartke Kickback 15 Bass Amp Combo

Markbass

9004 - Markbass 121 Lite Alain Caron Combo
6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P Bass Combo
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin (300W1x15)
13279 - MarkBass Markacoustic AC601 Combo
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (300W,1x12)
5474 - Mark Bass Mini CMD151P (300W,1x15W)
5475 - Mark Bass CMD121H (300W, 1x12)
9940 - Markbass Mini CMD 151 Jeff Berlin
9938 - MicroMark 801 Bass Combo

ORANGE

15715 - Orange Crush Bass 100 Bass Amp
15716 - Orange Crush Bass 25 Bass Amp
15714 - Orange Crush Bass 50 Bass Amp
15111 - Orange OB1 300 Combo

Roland

6320 - Roland CB100 (100W, 1x12)
4433 - Roland CB120XL Cube 120X (120w,1x12)
4435 - Roland Cube 20XL BASS (20W, 1x8)
4434 - Roland Cube 60XL (60W, 1x10)
5678 - Roland Microcube Bass RX, (5W, 4x4)

Bass Heads

15176 - Ashdown ABM1200-EVO IV 1200w Bass Head
14618 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Amp Head
16112 - Ampeg SVT350H Bass Amp Head, s-hand
15115 - ABM 600 EVO IV 600W Ashdown Bass Head
15177 - Ashdown ABM600RC EVO IV 600W Head
14531 - Ashdown RM800 Rootmaster Bass Amp Head
14553 - Ashdown Retroglide 800 Compact Bass Head
13200 - Eden E300 Bass Amplifier
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13198 - Eden WTX500 Bass Amp Head
16044 - Eich T1000 Bass Amp
16043 - Eich T300 Bass Amp
16027 - Eich T500 Bass Amp
16026 - Eich T900 Bass Amp
15484 - Fender Bass Man 800
16318 - Gallen Krueger MB500 Bass Amp Head
16319 - Gallen Krueger MB500 Fusion Bass Amp H
9349 - Hartke HA2500 Bass Head
9027 - Hartke Klo 1000 Bass Head
12382 - Hartke LH1000 Bass Head
15588 - Hartke TX600 Bass Amplifier
14828 - Mark Bass Nano Mark 300 Bass Amp Head
10408 - MarkBass Bass MultiAmp Stereo
6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head 500w
9035 - Markbass Little Mark III Tube Bass Head
5244 - MarkBass Little Mark Tube 800, 800W
7962 - Markbass TTE500 Randy Jackson Bass Head
9941 - Markbass Little Mark 250 Head Black
15271 - Markbass Little Mark Ninja Bona Head
9944 - Markbass MultiAmp
15151 - Markbass Randy Jackson TTE501 Bass Head
9725 - Markbass TTE801 Randy Jackson Bass Head
15109 - Orange 4 Stroke 300 Bass Amp
15110 - Orange 4 Stroke 500 Bass Amp
6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head

Bass Cabinets

13640 - Aguilar SL112 Bass Cabinet
5677 - Ashdown ABM810 (8x10)
6457 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15)
15766 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15) Used
15178 - Ashdown ABM210H EVO IV 300w 2 x 10"
15460 - Ashdown ABM210H NEO
6456 - Ashdown ABM410H (4x10)
6450 - Ashdown MAG410T Deep (4x10)
15185 - Ashdown RM210T EVO 300w 2 x 10" Cab
15183 - Ashdown RM 112T EVO 300w 1 x 12" Cab
15184 - Ashdown RM 115T EVO 300w 1 x 15" Cab
15186 - Ashdown RM 610T EVO 900w 6 x 10" Cab
14196 - Blackstar HT Metal 412A Extension Cab
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13195 - Eden EX210 Bass Cab
16054 - Eich 110XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16055 - Eich 110XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16041 - Eich 112XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohms
16042 - Eich 112XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohms
16075 - Eich 115L Bass Cabinet
16052 - Eich 115XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16053 - Eich 115XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16039 - Eich 1210S Bass Cabinet
16040 - Eich 1210S Bass Cabinet
16071 - Eich 210M Bass Cabinet
16069 - Eich 212L Bass Cabinet
16070 - Eich 212M Bass Cabinet
16048 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16050 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16068 - Eich 410L Bass Cabinet
16067 - Eich 610L Bass Cabinet
16061 - Eich 612XL Bass Cab
16065 - Eich 810L Bass Cabinet
16321 - Gallen Krueger CX115 Bass Cabinet
16320 - Gallen Krueger MB210 Bass Amp Combo
14254 - Hartke 210XL 2 x 10" Bass Cab
5476 - Mark Bass STD104HR (4x10)
6241 - Mark Bass STD102HF (2x10)
6242 - Mark Bass STD104HF (4x10)
5477 - Mark Bass STD151HR (1x15)
9033 - Markbass Traveler 121H Bass Ext Cab
9034 - Markbass Traveler 151 P Bass Guitar Cab
4733 - Mark Bass Traveller TRV102P (2x10)
16013 - Markbass 123 Alain Caron Bass Cab
16014 - Markbass CMD Super K1 Alain Caron
5431 - Mark Bass NY121 New York 1x 12 Bass Cab
10412 - Markbass NY122 2 x 12 Bass Cab
10409 - Markbass NY151 1 x 15 Bass Cab
10410 - Markbass NY151 RJ 1 x 15" Randy Jackson
15272 - Markbass New York 122 Ninja Bona Cab
6259 - Orange OBC115 (1x15)
6260 - Orange OBC410H (4x10)
5241 - Orange OBC810 (8x10)

For full guitar details, pricing and photos, enter the number next to each guitar model into our SKU search facility on the website.

GEAR OF THE MONTH

In which three renowned gear experts nominate their bass, amp and effects unit of the month. Whether new or old, cheap or pricey, simple or complex, this gear has earned its place in our affections through simply being brilliant...

BASS

Ernie Ball's ubiquitous Music Man Stingray has been blowing us (and a fair few speakers!) away for 41 years, and although its popularity has ebbed and flowed in that time, Flea's use of one thrust it back into the spotlight in the early 90s. The instrument looks unlikely to ever leave the spotlight again. We know the Stingray's history, and we know its place in Leo Fender's history too: its simple design, effortless playability, ground-shaking EQ and monstrous tone have sealed its place at the top table of bassdom, which is why they remain so popular to this day. The past decade has seen specification changes, added options, anniversary models and the introduction of the Family Reserve models, but the basic formula is still a winner. No matter what musical genre you play, or style you adopt, the Stingray can pretty much do it all. This model pictured dates back to 1999, is finished in teal with an abalone pickguard and has been upgraded with an Aguilar MM4 pickup and John East MMSR 4 preamp. The latter offers volume, active bass, treble, mid and mid-sweep with an extra push/pull facility on the volume control to provide added glassy treble reminiscent of Music Man's Sabre bass. A groove monster!

Mike Brooks

AMP

It's such a simple and obvious idea that it's amazing that no-one thought of it before – a small, compact but punchy bass combo that could be used either upright or tilted back so that it also functions as a monitor. The 112 Kickback has been one of Hartke's bestselling amps since it was first introduced. I had one very early on, and used it for both electric and double bass. It was loud enough for most small jobs, and although at that time it was quite expensive, it always seemed to flatter the tone of any bass put through it – even a double bass with a piezo pickup. The three-band EQ is perfectly matched to the cabinet's dimensions, and you have a useful pre-shape function with a control allowing you to sweep across and cut a wide range of mid-frequencies. Since those early versions, the Kickback has been radically updated: it now boasts a 500-watt class D amp and the brilliant HyDrive 12" paper/aluminium cone speaker with a neodymium magnet. It's still a brilliant piece of lightweight design, and best of all you can get the new version for around £389, which from memory is less than I paid for the 100-watt version years ago!

Kev Sanders

FX UNIT

If there's one effect that has exploded in terms of options and appreciation in the last decade, it's the fuzz pedal. There are so many kinds of fuzz: every fuzz-lovin' bassist you meet will suddenly get very animated when asked about favourites, and probably start babbling incoherently while listing about 20 different options. So let's have a look at one of the most versatile fuzzes out there, the Hoof Reaper from Earthquaker Devices. This unit's versatility comes in part from the fact that it's actually two fuzz pedals in one – it's a combination of the Hoof and the Tone Reaper. If that wasn't enough, they've also added an octave circuit, and all three parts can be used in any combination or individually. The Hoof Reaper is capable of some of the most insanely face-melting fuzz sounds you'll ever encounter, and the octave means you can go totally nuts and still not lose low end. The two circuits are voiced very differently, and the Hoof side has a 'shift' control that gives you more midrange options, but both are capable of everything from subtle gain break-up through to a total fuzzgasm. Combine the two and it's armageddon in the best possible way. No less a bass pedal ninja than Juan Alderete swears by the Earthquaker Hoof Reaper, and who are we to argue? Dip into some of Juan's demos of the pedal on Youtube and you'll immediately hear what all the fuss is about.

Steve Lawson

POWER BASS

A new page in which NHS physiotherapist, martial artist and bassist Ben Whybrow gets you into shape for injury-free bass playing

Hello, and welcome to my new column on getting fit for bass! I've been playing bass for coming up to 10 years, and in that time I've assessed and treated a variety of bassists inside and outside of the NHS. Musculoskeletal complaints – or aches and pains – are the biggest medical issue affecting professional bassists, with the majority of these being preventable. Unfortunately, as sports medicine pushes forwards, performing arts medicine is still being held back by out-of-date ideas and misconceptions – so over the next few issues, I'll share with you some concepts and approaches from sports medicine to reduce injury risks for performing bassists in the following areas.

Load Management

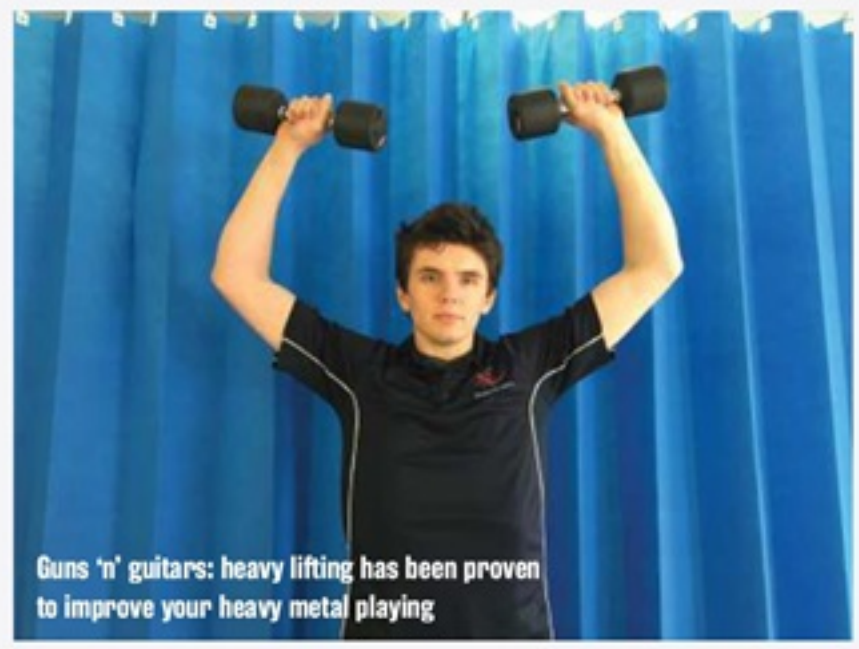
The number one way for reducing injury risk is managing the amount of effort and strain going through the body. Our tissues have a capacity for the amount of work they can produce on a day-to-day basis. This is individual to each person, depending on what they do with their bodies – and it can increase or decrease, as I will explain. Injuries occur when the tissues are asked to work in excess of their capacity, whether that's a single instance or over a period of time, especially without sufficient rest and recovery. If you're planning on increasing your practice or performance time, this should be done gradually, over a long period of time, because physiological changes occur slowly.

Exercise

Yes – the dirty word which makes so many of us cringe! Strength training – for example, lifting weights – is the number one exercise style for preventing injuries, as it increases tissues' capacity to tolerate greater stresses. Cardiovascular exercises such as running and swimming will provide some benefit, but their preventative effect is much lower than strength training. Sadly, stretching – which we are all brought up to do – has been found to have little to no effect on injury prevention. It has only been proven to be effective when combined with strength work, as flexibility has little effect on your tissue capacity. I recommend that you get in the gym or garage, and start pushing those muscles.

Being flexible is not enough, says Ben Whybrow...

...the key to bass-playing stamina is, instead, strength work


Guns 'n' guitars: heavy lifting has been proven to improve your heavy metal playing

Rest And Recovery

Seven or eight hours of sleep per night are essential for injury prevention, as is making sure of good-quality nutrition – not just energy drinks and takeaways! These ensure that your tissues have enough time and nutrition to recover. After a strenuous performance or practice, tissues typically need 24 to 48 hours to recover and to be able to perform again at the same or higher intensity. Plan out your schedule in advance to make sure that rest time is included. Strenuous playing before your tissues have recovered may not only increase injury risk, but reduce your performance ability as well.

Psychology

Continuous high levels of stress, anxiety, depression and other negative psychological conditions have all been found to increase the risk of physical injury as well as reduce your performance. Support is available in a variety of places, and if you feel you need it, go and get it without delay.

Warming Up

The best warm-up should involve moving your entire body, not just your hands, in order to increase blood flow and temperature through the tissues. It should last at least 5 to 10 minutes, especially if you're planning on playing bass for an hour or more.

Posture

Contrary to received wisdom, there is no ideal playing posture. In fact there is no 'bad' playing posture either: recent evidence tells us that the best posture is one that is consistently changing, as it is natural for us to want to move. Don't feel obliged to sit or stand bolt upright, as this will make you feel more tense: instead, go for that handstand slap solo! See you next month...

www.thejudophysio.com, @TheJudoPhysio

rockschool

APPLIED IMPROVISATION WITH ROCKSCHOOL

Major Pentatonic Substitutions continued, with Nik Preston

Leading on from our previous column on pentatonic superimposition, this month we're taking a look at how we can use the concept as an opportunity to explore motion in our lines which is contrary to that provided by the root movement.

Chromatically descending progressions can so easily lead to improvisers mirroring the chromatic motion in their own melodic lines. Obviously, as long as the melodic statement is strong and harmonically appropriate, this in itself isn't a problem – but it can, if used exclusively, become a little bit limiting.

There are two examples this month that show how, using our harmonic knowledge, we can apply pentatonic scales whose root movement is contrary to that of the chord progression.

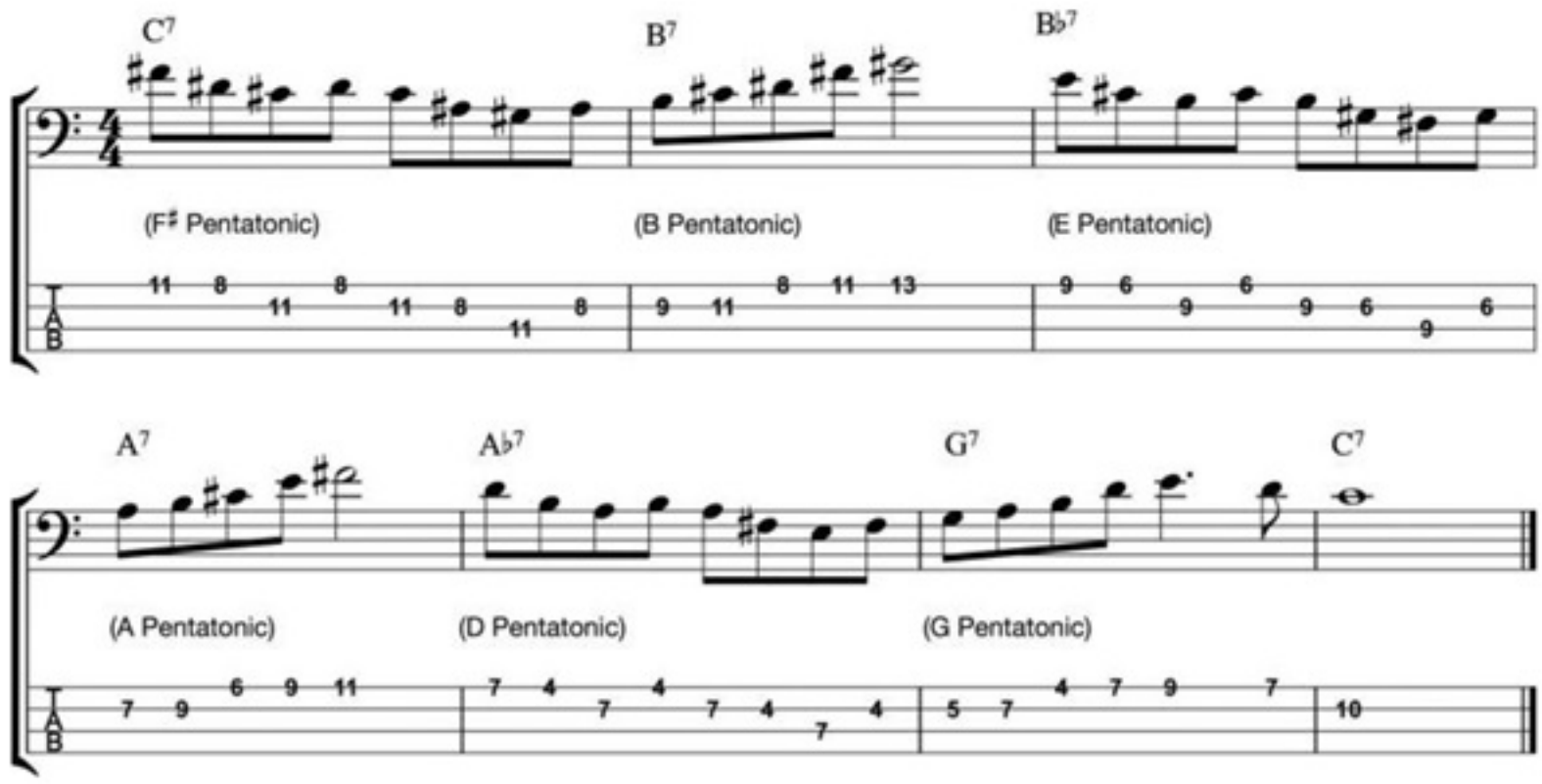
Example 1 is designed to make us more familiar with applying pentatonic scales in a cyclic fashion over a chromatically descending progression. By applying the pentatonic scale built on the b5 of the dominant chord in question, F# major pentatonic over a C7 chord, we can then use the subsequent major pentatonic from a fourth above (the next point in the cycle of fourths), F major pentatonic over an F7. This provides us with a very simple approach to apply to chromatically descending dominant chords, which you will encounter endlessly as an improviser. When extended over the whole cycle we now have an approach to negotiating chromatically descending dominant chords which is really quite accessible. (We all love the short cuts!)

Example 2 essentially employs the same concept but in reverse, applying chromatically descending major pentatonic scales to resolving dominants. You will often hear the term 'extended dominants' applied to dominants resolving around the cycle to other dominant chords. Pentatonic scales are familiar, relatively simple to play technically, and easily lend a lyrical quality to melodic lines, making them an essential part of most contemporary musicians' vocabulary. The ability to freely apply pentatonic scales to chords built on a different root note is a pretty advanced step and allows us to access more tensions. Easy to say, but sometimes a little counterintuitive for bassists!

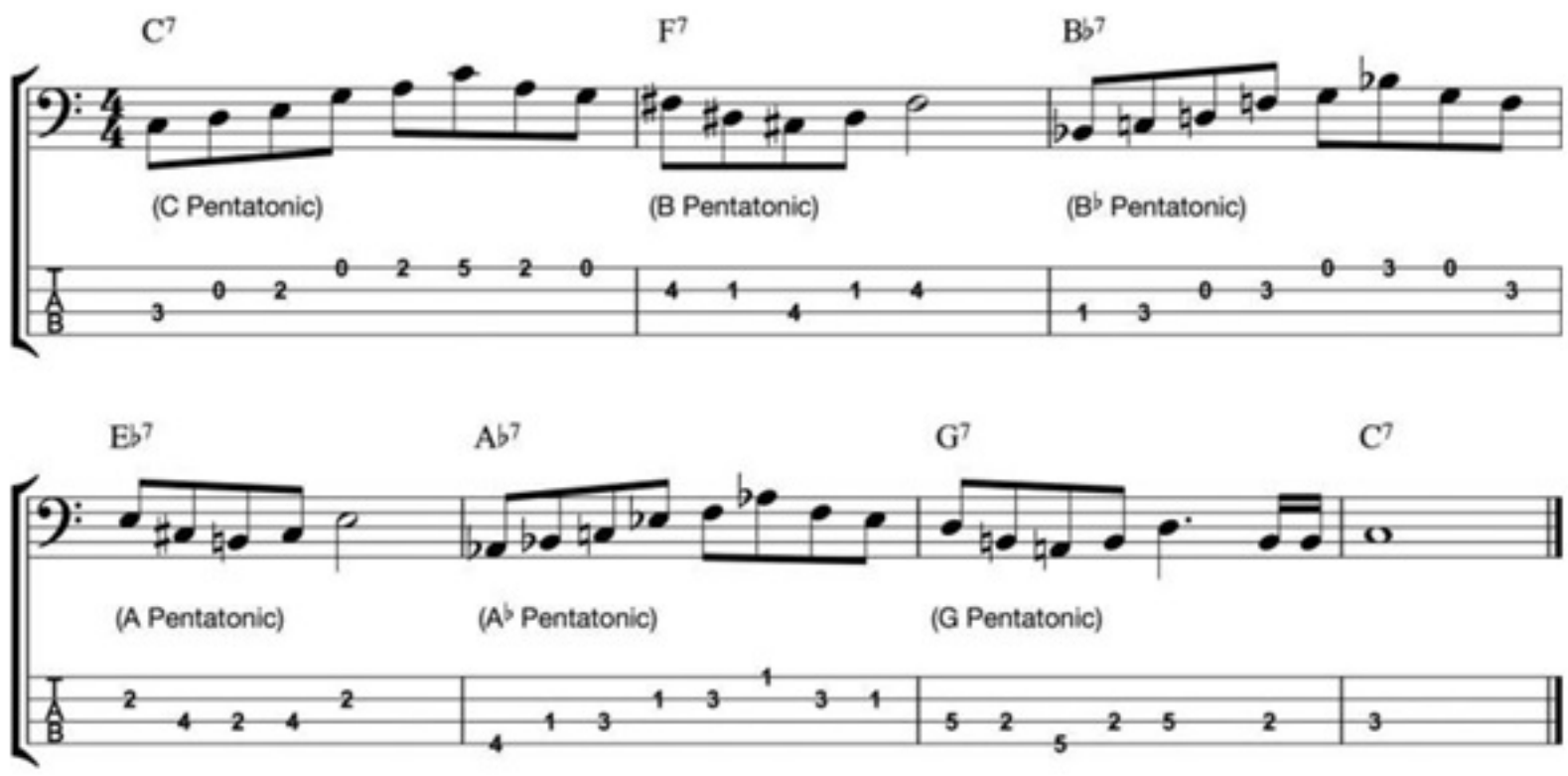
We're only looking at dominant chords and the tensions created by applying pentatonic scales built on the b5 (implying altered scale) and the root this month, but you can take the concept across all of the chord types shown in the last column.

Just remember that the concept is that we can apply scales and chords that aren't only those built on the root. While this isn't necessarily the most intuitive approach for bass players, it allows us to negotiate tricky chord progressions with a range of sounds without needing to learn a lot of new patterns.

EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



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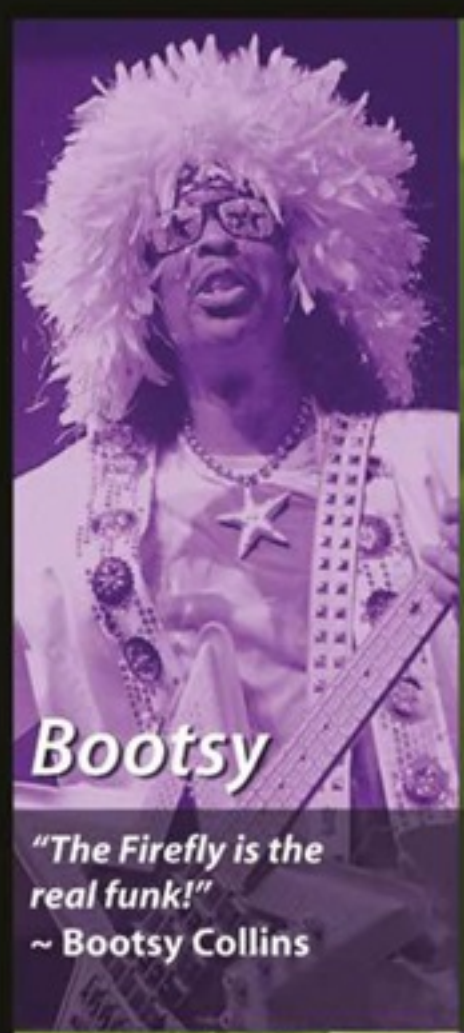
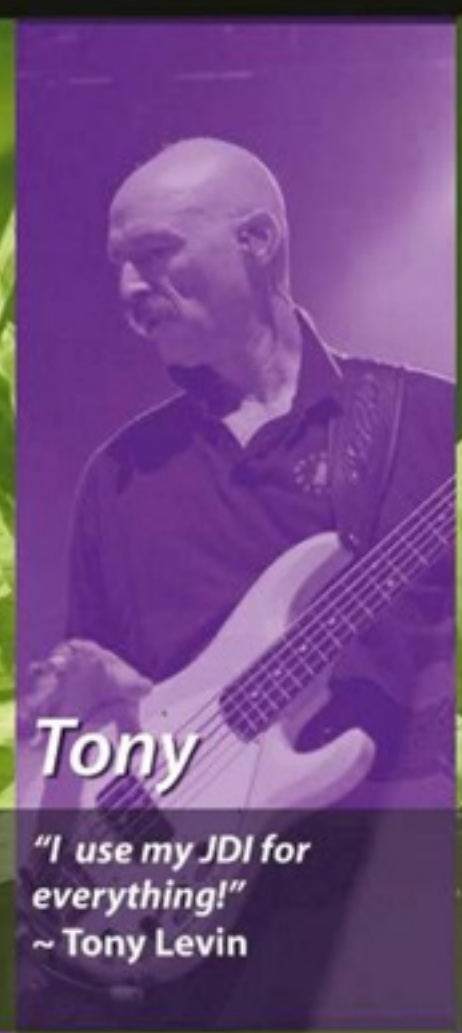


Bootsy

"The Firefly is the real funk!"
~ Bootsy Collins

Marcus

"I never play without it!" (JDV)
~ Marcus Miller



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~ Tony Levin

Nathan

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~ Nathan East

Billy

"I love it and use it every day!" (JDV)
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NO TREBLE

Kevin Johnson brings us up to date with Stateside bass happenings

This month has been full of great news in the bass community: new gear, new tour announcements, and new bass videos. But there was one piece of news that blew No Treble readers away, and that was the announcement that the original members of the Dixie Dregs will be reuniting for a tour in 2018. Though rumblings of the legendary jazz rock fusion band's reincarnation have been going around for two years, drummer Rod Morgenstein affirmed the return in a video for *Rock, Roots, & Blues – Live* magazine. The band will be rounded out by guitarist Steve Morse, violinist Allen Sloan, keyboardist Steve Davidowski, and the mighty Andy West on bass.

West opened up about the process in a post on the Dixie Dregs website, saying: "Earlier this year, the five of us got together and started talking seriously about playing together as the Dixie Dregs again. Our shared history goes way back in time (for some of us, as far back as high school), to the early 70s, so the synergy of this group has a particular feeling to it that we knew would be worth revisiting... Who knows what the musical future will bring for the Dregs? But right now, we are looking forward to playing live again."

If you're unfamiliar with the band's catalogue, do yourself a favour and check it out. Their first commercial release, *Free Fall*, was released 40 years ago and still holds up, thanks in part to West's work. His bass lines are foundational while still lively, but it's his solo breaks that will send you back to the woodshed. The bassist shared on the band's Facebook page that they will be hitting the road in March to focus on the East Coast of the United States. "Trust me, we would all love to play in as many places as possible. But we have to start somewhere, we have to start relatively small, it has to be doable, and after all that it has to make practical sense."

In other news, the top video for the month was a killer rendition of 'The Pot' by Tool from earlier this year. No Treble fans – and most of the world it seems – were ecstatic as bassist Justin Chancellor also shared that the new album is "about 90 percent there". So if 2017 isn't going your way, chin up. 2018 is already shaping up to be a good year.

www.notreble.com

BASSCHAT

Fab gear explored with Silvia Bluejay of Basschat

Like everybody else, bassists like to show off their new, shiny tools of the trade and indulge in some serious ogling of those belonging to others. Basschat has an entire subforum that not only allows us to do just that, but also actively invites puns and double entendres – Gear Porn. That's the place where we are asked to whip out what we want to flash for others to admire: there is much drooling over photos, and lusting after gorgeous models sharing a home with someone else.

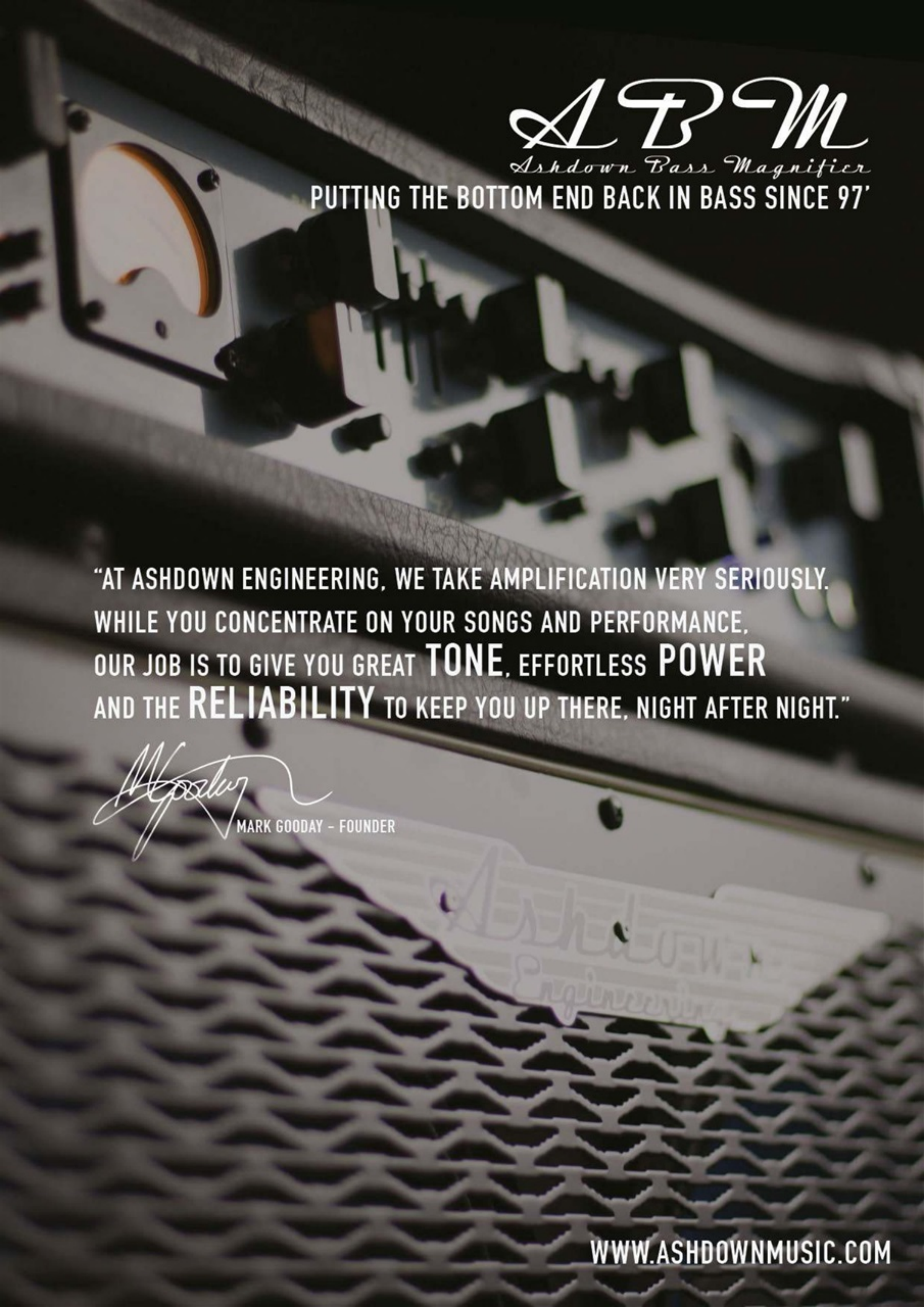
More often than not, temptation takes over, reduces us to quivering wrecks, and forces us to visit the Basschat Marketplace in the hope of satisfying our lust – because the spirit might conceivably be willing to hold on to our wallet, but the flesh gets weaker and weaker, and weaker, with each post we read.

Like the 'other' kind of porn, Basschat's porn is divided into categories (via different threads), and you can choose to open just the ones that float your boat, or tackle them all one by one. Have a thing for white (or black) basses? Get your kicks in this subforum. Weak at the knees at the thought of a smooth, fretless fingerboard? Feast your eyes on the Fretless Porn thread. Consider a matching headstock to be the epitome of irresistible sexiness? Click on Matching Headstock Basses Needed and enjoy. Or indeed you may prefer more 'manly' headless basses – we have a thread with a collection of those too. If you are of the short-scale persuasion, you won't feel left out either. There are also threads dedicated to individual manufacturers, for the benefit of those faithful types who are turned on by familiar traits shared by all the objects of their desire.

Enough with the facile innuendo. Why do we feel so compelled to post about our new purchases, and/or show off our most prized musical possessions? Very little is to do with boasting about how much disposable income we may have: most of the gear flaunted on the forum, from mass-produced workhorses to expensive boutique items, is usually the result of months, or even years, of careful saving, and selling of non-essential items to raise enough cash to make that particular dream come true. We are driven by our desire to proselytise about our favourite manufacturers of instruments and amplification, or to let others know about brilliant luthiers, cab makers or engineers they may not have heard about. If our new gear appears to have solved a common problem, whether just an irritating glitch or something more serious or even potentially catastrophic, we want our fellow bass players to know, be tempted to try for themselves if they can, and post their comments.

Some of the threads in the Gear Porn forum start as a defence. For instance, an arguably unfairly much-maligned make of instrument may have claims such as 'horrendous neck-dive', 'cheap and nasty hardware', 'neck like a baseball bat' explained and refuted; a model/manufacturer commonly perceived to be hopelessly uncool, or irretrievably stuck in the bad old days of music making, will be shown by aficionados in a different light.

Despite the potential for bitching – or indeed, perhaps, because of it – such threads usually develop into fascinating, informative, myth-busting reads that end up teaching us something, changing our perceptions, expanding our musical horizon, or, erm, causing us more, unexpected Gear Acquisition Syndrome.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OUR JOB IS TO GIVE YOU GREAT TONE, EFFORTLESS POWER
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WELCOME TO THE GIZMODROME

Level 42 bassist Mark King has a new supergroup with a difference — and we couldn't wait to hear all about it. Mike Brooks gets the inside info from the man himself

Pics: Olly Curtis

"I had a text from Stewart Copeland at the end of June 2016, asking if I'd like to join a band in Italy," says Mark King, relaxing in a comfortable sofa on a sunny summer day. "I just said 'Yeah' very flippantly – simple as that! I had the following two weeks off anyway, so seven days later I flew out to Milan and we started putting down ideas..."

And that, readers, is how the formation of this year's most exciting project, Gizmodrome, came to pass. If only life was always this easy, right?

When word came through that King was involved in the new group, we were as eager as you to hear all about it. As it turns out, the project has been in the pipeline for just over a year, the fruits of which are about to be unleashed. With musical illuminati such as drummer Copeland, ex-King Crimson guitarist extraordinaire Adrian Belew and renowned keyboard player Vittorio Cosma also involved, it's no wonder the musical world is itching to hear about Gizmodrome, whose self-titled album is due for release in mid-September.

"Stewart is so creative, and had some good solid stuff," remarks King. "We worked together on a BBC show back in the mid-80s, although our first encounter goes back to 1981 when Level 42 supported the Police in Europe. I've always liked his playing. He's completely my sort of drummer, because he's so identifiably 'him': no-one else really sounds like him. Adrian is incredibly inventive too – and it's impossible not to spark off people like that."

He continues: "My initial feelings were that this could be really great, just by

virtue of the people involved. The whole process started on 7 July 2016 and after 10 days, I thought we'd made a great start, but I felt that we needed to go the extra mile and look for some extra material. We reconvened in early February and again in March, and laid down another five songs – and suddenly we knew where we were going with this."

Has King contributed to the songwriting, we ask? Yes indeed, it turns out. "It started off being Adrian's band," he explains. "He asked if I had any ideas, and I said 'I can certainly dig some out', which I did, and Vittorio has done exactly the same. The finished product doesn't sound like any of the ideas I took out, apart from the basic riffs, but it started to follow its own lead which is what makes it so exciting. You just need to remember to not be precious and to go with it."

At the still-to-be-announced live shows, the drumming community will be well catered for, King tells us. "We'll be using [Level 42's regular drummer] Pete Ray Biggin for the live stuff, as Stewart is vocalising a lot of the tracks and wants to get up and do all of that. In fact, we're going to have three kits on stage – I'm going to have a go, and Adrian is a mean drummer as well. There's too much fun to be had here not to do this...

"At the moment, I don't know what form or shape a tour would take. I wanted to make a great album first, and if people like it and want to go and see it live, then we can start booking the shows. I don't want to get up with Gizmodrome and have to play three or four Level 42 numbers, because that's not the point of the band. Similarly, I don't want to be singing 'Roxanne' either!"

Let's chat about bass gear. The eagle-eyed among you may well have spotted King playing a Fender Jazz at a recent festival in Slovenia, alongside various selfies taken with the splendid Stu Hamm. It was evidently a meeting of bass legends, although not in the most stress-free of circumstances. What happened there?

"We were booked to play at a beautiful festival in Lasko, Slovenia, and we had a connecting flight in order to get there," he says. "I had a feeling when we changed planes that the gear might not make it! As I watched the baggage ramp, I didn't see any of our stuff going onto the second plane, so I asked the baggage handler to hang on and wait for the gear, but he wouldn't. Basically we were told to get on the plane or it would take off without us."

King continues: "When we have backline and gear supplied by the promoter, we stick a Fender Jazz bass on the gear list as well, just in case, and a Mark Of The Unicorn [MOTU; backing tracks software] interface. I had my MacBook, which is like my office, in my suitcase, and I've always got a USB stick with a backup of the set on it. Be warned, children at home – always carry a USB stick with any information you need in your pocket! I knew that if it came to the worst, we could run some of the bass sequences and stuff. I spent the afternoon loading up Logic into my laptop and seeing if it would all work, and then downloading drivers. Such are the times we live in: sitting up a mountain in Slovenia, you can download a MOTU driver and away you go."

"I DON'T WANT TO GET UP WITH GIZMODROME AND HAVE TO PLAY THREE OR FOUR LEVEL 42 NUMBERS, BECAUSE THAT'S NOT THE POINT OF THE BAND. SIMILARLY, I DON'T WANT TO BE THERE SINGING 'ROXANNE' EITHER!"

Only strings remained an issue – which is where Mr Hamm enters the picture. "The strings on the bass were awful, which was a big deal for me," explains King. "When we got to the hotel, Stu Hamm and his band were rehearsing in the back. We went and said hello, and Stu and the band were very sweet trying to help us out. They weren't playing until the next day, and offered us all their equipment, but what I really needed were some strings. Bless Stu, he gave me a couple of sets, which were great but they were still big compared to what I normally use. When we got to the second

Status
Graphite

song, 'To Be With You Again', my forearm was starting to have a go at me for being a big jessie, because that's a tricky bass-line with lots going on. I was thinking 'Be calm Mark, be calm – these are man's strings you're using!' And the gig was brilliant – it was the first time we'd lost our gear in 37 years, yet it was one of the best gigs we've done."

Talking of bass gear, your eyes aren't deceiving you if you think Mr King's weapon of choice on our front cover looks a little larger than normal. That's right, he's entered the realm of extended-range basses, but don't expect an album of jazz odysseys just yet. "I saw Thundercat on TV and thought I'd love a six-string bass to noodle about on," he tells us. "Status happily obliged with a six-string Paramatrix model, and I

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have such a lot of fun with it that I tend to take it around with me. It's really another instrument in itself. I've only used it in the studio at home, but it's an amazing bit of kit: so well-balanced, and the profile on the neck is really something else. The green LEDs are great too. In fact, afterone of the Ronnie Scott's shows back in 2012, I received a letter from a chap who said he'd had to leave the show because they were too piercing and that maybe I should consider turning them off once in a while. Cheeky!"

It's been a busy year for Level 42, with various festival dates through the summer fitting around a recent run of shows as special guests of UB40. As two staple touring bands of the 80s with sizeable fan followings, the bill seems like an obvious fit. King explains: "As Level 42, we go out and do our tours and it's lovely – our fans have been so great, they come out and see us every two years en masse which is absolutely brilliant. But I want to get more people to come and see the gig, so we need to try and reach new people. If we're not troubling the charts anymore, and there's not a wealth of new material, then how are we going to make new audiences? The best way to do it is by playing festivals and being the special guests on something like a UB40 tour, because then you're playing to 8,000 to 10,000 people a night who are the perfect demographic for us. If your band is at the top of its game, which we are, then you're potentially going to win over a lot of new fans."

Talking of the 80s, King is equally amused and proud that Level 42's set at Glastonbury 1986, performed alongside co-headliners the Cure and the Psychedelic Furs, was recently voted in the popular press as the best festival in Glastonbury's history. With a twinkle in his eye, he claims that he knew this all along. "Well, I told them that at the time!" he chuckles. "Who decides these things? I can't dispute that it was a great gig, and also great for us as a band. Everything was seriously taking off for us at that point. That show really ignited my love affair with playing festivals. If I'm not working, I go to Glastonbury as a punter because I just love the event. The last one I saw was Dolly Parton's year – there were 200,000 people there on a Sunday afternoon, which is pretty amazing."

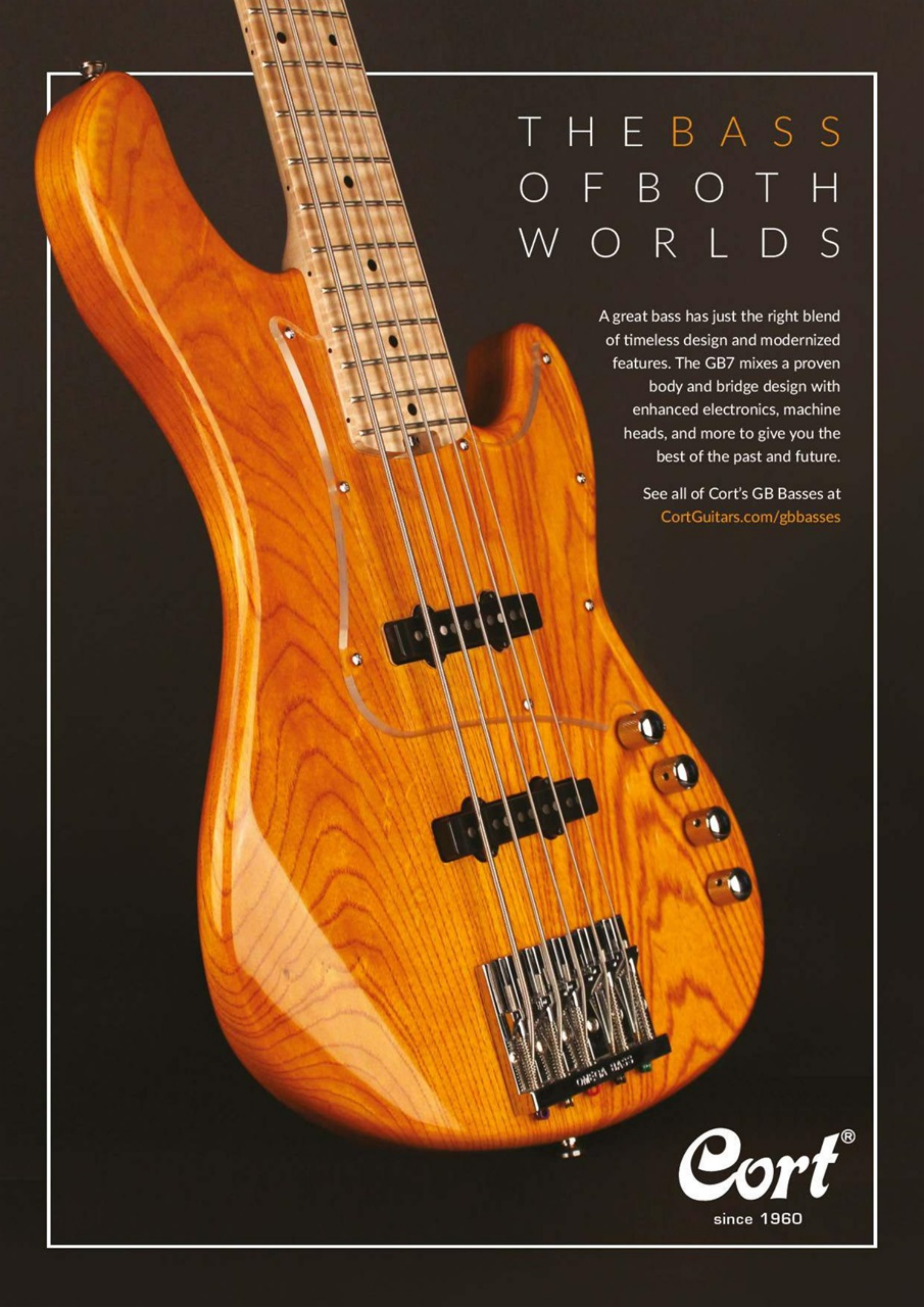
He reminisces: "When we played there, we played 'Kansas City Milkman' and I got Paul Crockford, our manager at the time, to sing the ska lick part in the song. He was a secret mod, so he loved the whole ska thing. I always said I'd get him up on stage – and the one gig I got him onstage was Glastonbury! I remember I announced to the audience we had a special guest coming up, and all 86,000 people looked really excited. On comes the manager, and there were blank expressions all round."

"THE BEST WAY TO DO IT IS BY PLAYING FESTIVALS AND BEING THE SPECIAL GUESTS ON SOMETHING LIKE A UB40 TOUR, BECAUSE THEN YOU'RE PLAYING TO 8,000 TO 10,000 PEOPLE A NIGHT WHO ARE THE PERFECT DEMOGRAPHIC FOR US"

Does he look back fondly on those far-off days? "At that time, it was a rollercoaster: we were working towards all of the things that were coming our way at that point. In hindsight, we should have supported each other more within the band. No-one tells you these things or prepares you for success. There were four of us in the band, but we were four individuals and we weren't really communicating on any kind of level. Nowadays, we would've said 'Hey, isn't this amazing, guys? Isn't this incredible?'"

King's excitement and enthusiasm for the new Gizmodrome project is tangible – and like a kid at Christmas, he leaves us for an afternoon of press with his new Gizmodrome bandmates. They haven't seen each other for the best part of six weeks, and their closeness is obvious. "I just bumped into Stewart coming into the hotel," he says, "and to walk up to each other, shake hands and say 'We've got an amazing record on our hands' with beaming grins on our faces, is an amazing feeling."

Info: www.facebook.com/gizmodrome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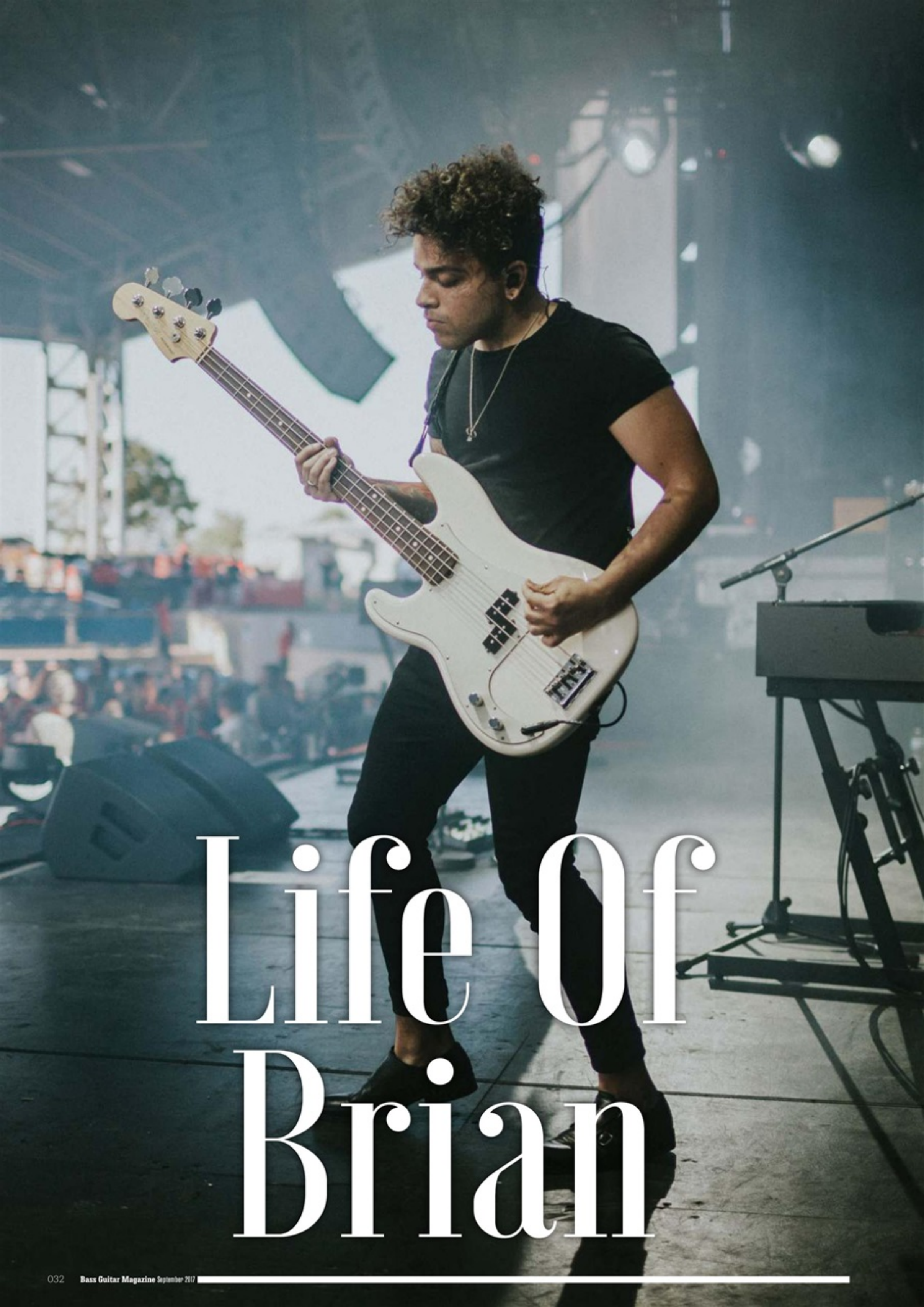


Life Of Brian

Brian MacDonald's band PVRIS — pronounced Paris — are the top of the pops among the rock-loving youth, and with their eagerly-awaited second album on its way, they're set to rise a long way in a short time.

Interview: Joel McIver

"I don't really look at it like that. I'm just sitting in it and just enjoying it," muses Brian MacDonald, softly-spoken bassist with PVRIS, when we ask him how it feels to be one of the most attention-grabbing new bands to come out of America in years. That's an admirable attitude for someone whose group are the toast of the rock media at the moment: alongside MacDonald, guitarist Alex Babinski and singer Lyndsay Gunnulfsen (aka Lynn Gunn), PVRIS have been the recipients of so much adulation in the last year or so it would be understandable if their egos had over-inflated. But none of that is evident in our fella, a man whose love of bass keeps him stable...

What was your first bass, Brian?
My first bass guitar was a Fender Jazz; I got it in 2011 on my birthday, and I remember telling my dad what I was going to do with it, and he was super stoked. I just recently auctioned it off for charity. I did this little event on Twitter, where I put it up on eBay and it sold in four seconds! The person who bought it sat down with me on a Skype session. That bass has been all around the world with me. My heart was hurting a little bit to let it go, but I know it's going to a good cause. I do miss it, though.

So what's your current gear?
Right after I let the Jazz go, I got a custom Fender P-Bass. It's all black, with a maple neck, and I love it. For the new album, I got a white Precision with a rosewood neck: I did the whole record with that. Those are my current basses. I used to play a Stingray, but that's long gone.

Why switch from J to P?
I love Jazz basses, don't get me wrong, but the way those P-Basses sit on my body is very comfortable and they're a lot easier to play. They sound so good, too.

Your new album, *All We Know Of Heaven, All We Need Of Hell*, has a ton of bass all over it.
Yes, there's a lot of different bass. We ventured out a lot and got really crazy with it. We had a brilliant producer who really brings out your inner musician and your thoughts and ideas. We had synth bass, we had real bass, it was a mixture of both. I did a lot of grooving, and letting my inner James Jamerson out. He was one of my idols. He was on so many tracks: they called him 'the Hook' because he only used his index finger. I do that too sometimes.

Which other bassists do you admire?
Jamerson was the big one, because a lot of soul and funk was playing around my house when I was growing up. Marvin Gaye, the Temptations, Earth Wind & Fire. Jaco Pastorius was another one: I found out about him through watching Victor Wooten videos. There's one video where Victor is talking about a particular Jaco song, and I looked it up on Youtube and thought 'Wow – he's amazing!' And then Prince was obviously an influence – he was an amazing bassist, and really underrated.

Do you play slap?
Not really. I'm still learning, and trying to pick up on things and become better at them, and slap bass is one of them. I broke both my wrists skateboarding and snowboarding when I was a little crazy kid early on in life, so they're kinda weak, and I'm becoming accustomed to that. I did a lot of fingerpicking on this record too, and some with a pick, and then there is actually some slap on a song called 'Heaven'.

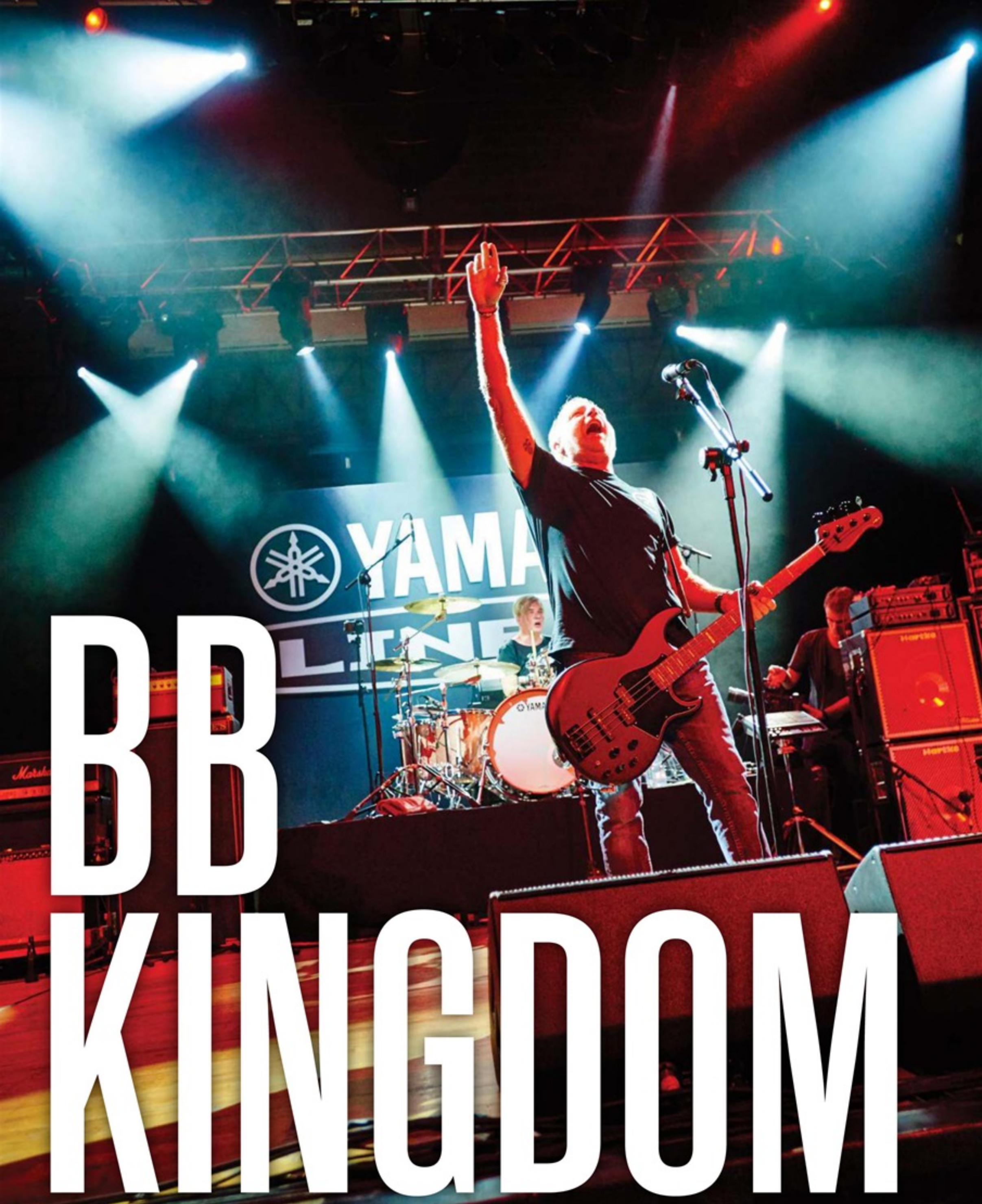
How did you get into bass?
When we were starting the band, I played guitar in a different band, so when Pvris asked me to join on bass, I thought 'You know what? Two less strings, I can do it, it'll be easy' – and I was completely wrong! It's a totally different instrument. People say 'Bass is just like guitar' and I say 'No way'. It's a completely different style of playing. So I sat down and put myself through courses, learning how to play. I fell in love with it and was always playing bass when I was at home. My guitar was collecting dust.

What do you like about playing bass?
I love the grooves, and being in the pocket with the drums. That feeling grew on me and I just love it. The last few years of touring have all come out on the new record: I've let all those moments shine and got a little crazy and weird with my playing style.

Do you play five-strings?
Just four-strings, I've never used a five. On our last album, all the songs were tuned to C, so my custom Precision has 135s on there. I'm basically playing a pipe! It holds the tuning perfectly and still sounds good, though. On the new record we play some songs in standard tuning as well as in C, and it's been nice to play thinner strings for a change.

Do you use amps live?
We recently switched to Kemper, which is perfect. I just run through that and go straight to the front of house and it's amazing. When I first started I had an Ampeg 6x10 cab and an SVT 4 Pro head, but that blew up on stage, ha ha! It was unfortunate. That was my very first bass amp. After that I went to the Orange Tiny Terror, which was awesome, and then an Ampeg SVR cab hooked up to an Avalon M5 preamp, but since those it's been the Kemper. I just gave the Ampeg rig away to a bass player who's just starting to tour, because I hate seeing gear lying around that I don't use anymore. Technology these days is crazy, I can barely use my iPhone...

All We Know Of Heaven, All We Need Of Hell is out now on Rise. Info: www.pvris.com



BB KINGDOM

Yamaha's much-loved BB bass series hits 40, and a new version is launched to celebrate. Mike Brooks heads to Milan to raise a glass (or two) to a classic instrument

Pics: Joseph Branston

It's not every day that a renowned and well-regarded bass design reaches its 40th anniversary, when most bass ranges and designs change on a fairly regular basis or are deleted from the manufacturer's catalogue for good. When the bass range in question is the BB Series from Yamaha, we felt it was worthy of commemoration and celebration, especially when some of the leading lights of the bass world are either synonymous with the instrument or have spent a sizeable portion of their musical career using one. We're talking the likes of Billy Sheehan, Verdine White, Michael Anthony, Nathan East, Lee Sklar, Tony Kanal and Peter Hook to name but a few – players who know the sound they require and used a BB Series bass to achieve their sonic aims.

BGM was recently invited to attend the recent launch of the 2017 40th anniversary range and to celebrate the iconic instrument with journalists, writers, distributors, retailers and musicians from all over Europe at Yamaha's European motor racing headquarters in Milan. The event, named 'Tools For Tomorrow's Musician', also covered Yamaha's acquisition of Line 6 some three years ago, the launch of their new all-bells-and-whistles Helix product and the launch of Yamaha's European Guitar Division, so understandably there was a lot going on – but from the moment we reached the Yamaha headquarters, the new basses were clearly visible for everyone to get to grips with. Our mission? To assess if the new BBs stand up to comparison with the legendary models of the 70s and 80s.

Positioned alongside some sumptuous Yamaha racing motorcycles, the basses on display consisted of different Indonesian models: these make up the cheaper, more accessible, end of the range. Sampling these showed that the BB spirit is very much alive and kicking. The well-rounded bodies, deep lower cutaway, sturdily rigid multi-laminate neck and all-round playability are all very much in evidence. Several models had simpler, natural timber visuals, and there were several burst finish models and a few solid gloss colour basses too, all featuring three-ply scratchplates. Most models were passive, opting for a pair of volume controls and a master tone, while several examples included an active three-band EQ for those who prefer the tonal shaping and flexibility that active electronics provide.

Entering the main exhibition hall, more often used as a testing garage for the racing vehicles, we were given time to test both the Indonesian and Japanese bass models using Line 6 Helix processors with headphones. This meant that we could finally hear how the basses sounded and investigate some of the new features that have been incorporated into the design. The bolt-on neck attachment now incorporates a six-bolt mitre neck joint and borrows from several more expensive models in the Yamaha bass range, such as the Billy Sheehan Attitude. Four of the bolts hold the neck at a 90 degree angle, while the two extra bolts access the body and neck pocket at an angle. These grip onto the base of the neck so as they tighten, they pull the neck into the neck pocket: this ensures an even tighter connection with the body.

Another new feature is the through-body stringing on the 700 range and Pro models, both of which come equipped with the Vintage Plus Bridge: this facilitates standard toploading of the strings through the bridge unit, as per the norm. The bridge saddles are convertible, with one side offering a rounded point of contact for a softer tone, while the other more angled point of contact provides a tighter sound. Should you wish to string the bass using the through-body option, the ferrules through which the string enters are located at a 45 degree angle on the body edge, unlike the more customary rear-mounted ferrules. This means that less pressure is exerted on the string, along with a much reduced break angle compared to regular through-body stringing, before the string reaches the bridge saddle.

Other design features include alder-maple-alder multi-laminated woods that improve the stiffness of the body: this in turn helps to pronounce the inherent midrange of the instrument and also improves sustain and resonance. Then there are custom V7 pickups, courtesy of Yamaha Guitar Design; matte finished necks on some models; and a five-piece maple and mahogany neck laminate for improved attack and neck stability.

We were also impressed by a treatment called Initial Response Acceleration, where the instrument is subjected to vibration technology. This emulates the rigours of being played over a long period of time, so that when the player receives a new bass, it feels played in. In theory, this should create a better sound and tone and improve playability. Yamaha's mission has obviously been to bring the design up to date while retaining the classic ethos of the original design, and they've succeeded in doing so.

Chris Minh Doky laying down a pulsating version of 'Teen Town' with his BB Series bass

A fine evening's entertainment at the Alcatraz Concert Hall, courtesy of Peter Hook and Billy Sheehan among others

Current active BB models feature volume, pickup pan, three-band EQ and active/passive switch control sets

Mr Big's 'Mr Big', Billy Sheehan, tearing the roof off the hall

Yamaha endorsee Miki Santamaria, weaving his own brand of bass magic on his BB Series instrument

New meets old – a natural finish BB Series bass, hot off the production line

After speeches from the bosses of Yamaha Musical Instruments, some of whom had flown in from Japan for the launch, we were presented with BB and Line 6 Helix product demonstrations by Chris Minh Doky (Mike Stern, Michael Brecker, David Sanborn), Miki Santamaria and guitarist Steve Mackay from the band Twelve Foot Ninja and others, plus a live set in a recording studio based in the Yamaha grounds.

We managed to grab a quick chat with Miki Santamaria, who had this to say: "I've always played Yamaha instruments: before I became an endorsee with Yamaha, I was using a passive BB1600 with a P/J pickup configuration, so I know what the BB basses can do. I've been an endorsee for about five years now and once I started working with Yamaha, I chose the BB2024x as my go-to instrument. Anyone that has checked me out online will recognise that bass as the instrument I had resprayed in a chrome finish: it's very eyecatching. I'm currently playing at a lot of festivals in Spain and around Europe, and my BB basses go everywhere with me."

Following a torrential rainstorm that lasted the best part of five hours and saw a planned guided tour of Milan cancelled, we made our way to a venue by the name of the Alcatraz Concert Hall in the heart of the city, where we were treated to performances courtesy of Peter Hook & The Light and the Answer, featuring a guest appearance by the hardest-working bassist on the face of the planet, Mr Billy Sheehan. Both bands were seriously 'Yamaha-ed' up in the equipment department; both Hook and Sheehan have their respective associations with the BB Series of instruments. Sheehan's BB playing career was a stepping-stone that eventually led to the development of his signature Attitude instrument.

With Hook and his band performing for well over an hour, and the Answer showing why they're well placed to support Mr Big on their autumn tour, the show ended around 1am, at which time competition winners came to collect their prizes. The lucky winner of the star prize was fortunate enough to receive a signed Attitude LTD 3 directly from Sheehan himself.

With several BB Series basses heading towards the *BGM* control bunker for review, keep your eyes peeled for our assessment as to whether they live up to, match or even improve upon the legendary BB instruments of the past. From the examples we saw and played, the legend clearly continues.

Info: http://bit.ly/2tJ7gq3

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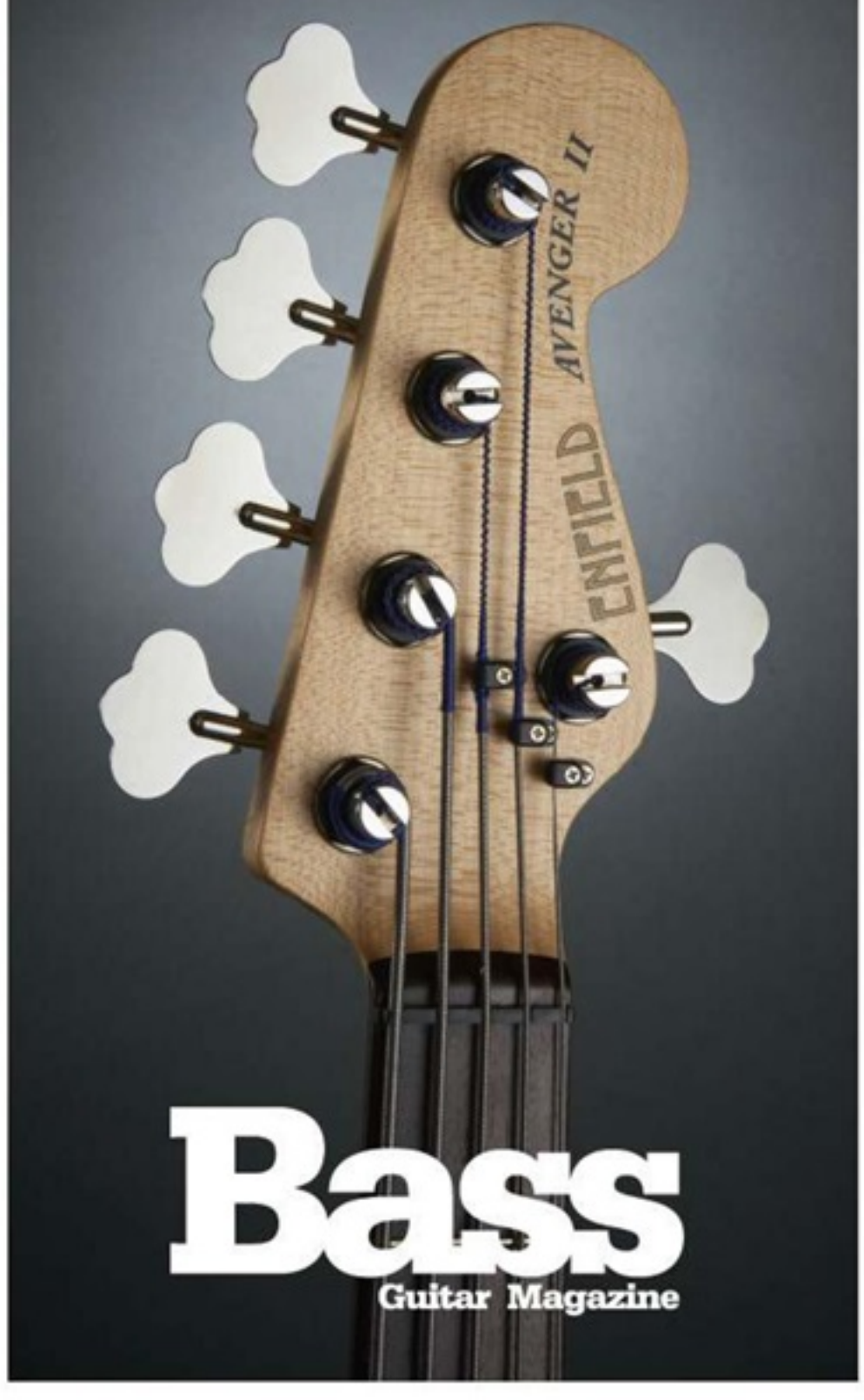


GOING UP

Italian bassist extraordinaire Lorenzo Feliciati schedules a new album, *The Elevator Man*.

Interview: Alison Richter

Like so many musicians, Lorenzo Feliciati's world turned upside down when he first heard Led Zeppelin. "It was easy to find a lot of different ingredients in their music: blues, heavy stuff, the folk and acoustic elements – everything you need when you're starting to understand what music is about," he says.

He was already playing bass at the time but analysing John Paul Jones' riffs made him look at the instrument as an entity unto itself and "not just a guitar with [fewer] strings." From Zeppelin to Gentle Giant to Weather Report, his view changed: he began to see "unlimited possibilities for bass guitar in terms of role, presence, confidence, and charisma."

Feliciati grew up in Italy, where he studied art in high school, and focused his college years on architecture. But music was his true calling, and ultimately he set his degree aside to pursue his passion. By that time he had discovered fretless bass through the works of Jaco Pastorius, Percy Jones and Mick Karn, which opened yet another avenue for his creativity.

Since the release of his first solo album, *Upon My Head*, in 2003, Feliciati has made a name for himself internationally as a musician, composer, producer, and clinician. Primarily self-taught, he also plays upright bass, some keyboards, and what he calls "easy guitar – I can't shred with those tiny strings!" His most recent album, 2015's *Koi*, was met with stellar reviews, further cementing his reputation as something of a master craftsman.

A Cort-endorsing artist, he plays a B5FL fretless five-string with Markbass pre/active EQ. He also favors a Maruszczyk Frog Headless five-string fretted, a Precision copy built by Italian luthier Matteo Rufini, and his longstanding 1972 Fender Jazz. "It is always there, ready to show them that it's still the best of the bunch," he says.

He uses Naples-based Galli Strings, noting: "I have always been satisfied with their products. I use Nickel Rockstar strings, gauges 0.45 to 105, with a 130 low B both on fretted and fretless," and relies mostly on his fingers – "fingers and thumb, not slapping," he clarifies – and occasionally on a customised Galli .73 Killpick with the *Koi* logo. "With fingers, of course I have more control, but with the pick you can create sounds that are impossible otherwise."

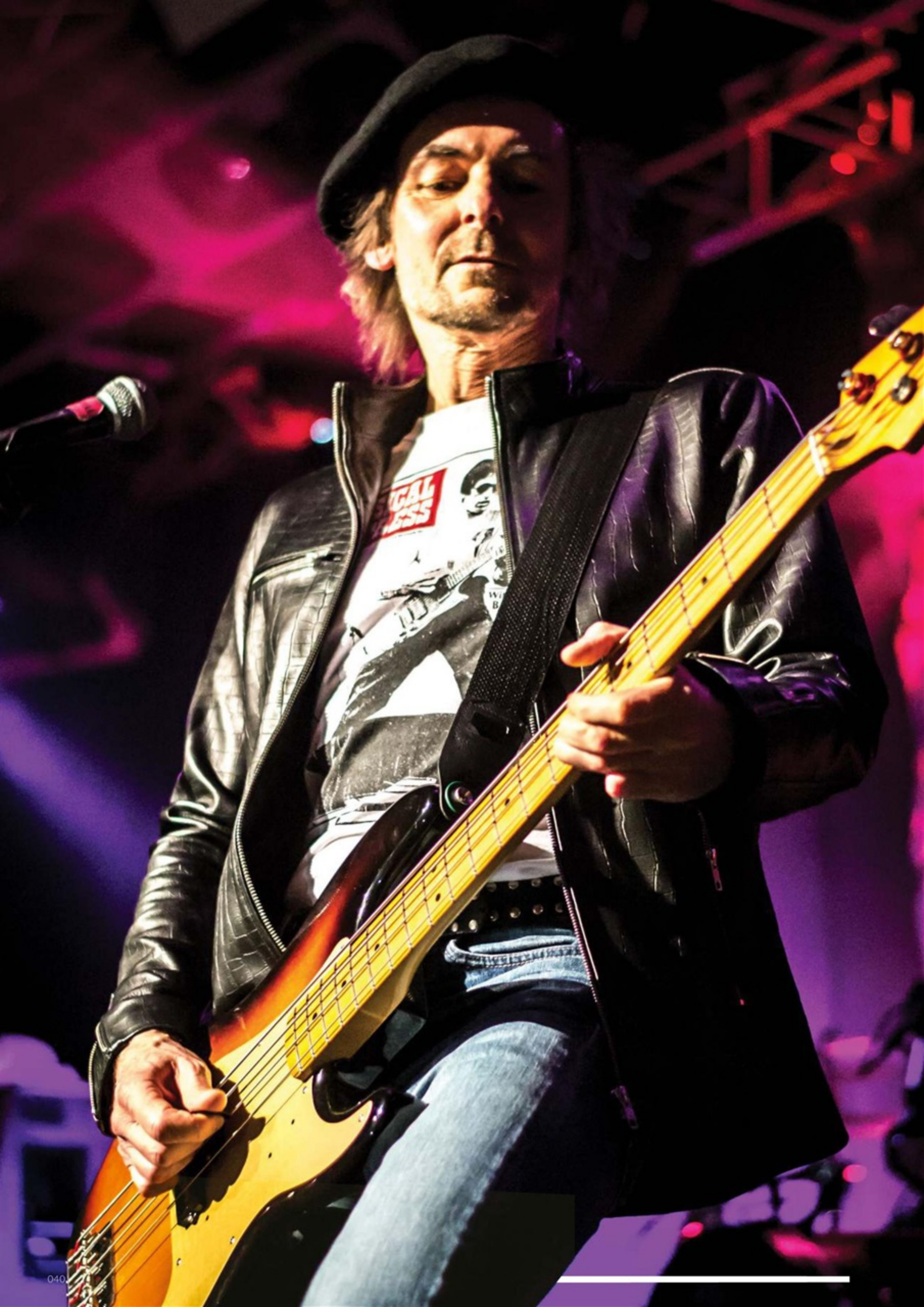
His amp of choice is a Markbass. "I prefer a 4x10 or a 1x15 cab with one of their heads," he says. "I love their CMD 102P 2x10 combo and the Mini CMD 102P 1x12 combo. For bigger stages and venues, I like the Standard 104HF 4x10 cabinet with a Multiamp or Little Mark head. I use a direct line using my own DI, the DI output of the amp, or something the engineer recommends, as I'm always open to discovering new gear. Sometimes the direct line is best if you need a very clean, direct sound, but it's always great to have the chance to add some clean, direct track to a very warm and round miked track."

His effects rack includes a DigiTech EX7, Strymon BigSky Reverb, Markbass Mini Distortion, Markbass Octaver, BOSS OC-2 and Eventide PitchFactor. He recently began endorsing EarthQuaker Devices and added the Spatial Delivery Sample & Hold Envelope Filter, Ghost Echo Reverb, Organizer, and Hoof Germanium/Silicon Fuzz to his rig.

Between clinics, gigs, working at home on his Pro Tools system, and tracking in recording studios, Feliciati has very little downtime. He is featured on *Tooth*, the new album from Roy Powell's Mumpbeak, and his next solo album, *The Elevator Man*, is scheduled for November. "As with *Frequent Flyer* [2011], it's an album with many faces," he says. "There will be a different lineup on each song, with guests such as Cuong Vu, Pat Mastelotto, Chad Wackerman, Mattias Eklundh, Roy Powell, Marco Sfogli and others."

Whether working solo or collaborating with other players, Feliciati follows two simple but important rules. The first is one that all musicians can learn from: "Music is teamwork, not a competition. The bass must work together with the other instruments, and not against them. As unoriginal as it may sound, the bass is the foundation and link between the rhythm and harmony." The second is one from which we can all take a lesson: "Just work hard to be a decent human being."

Info: www.lorenzofeliciati.com



FADE TO GRAY

Paul Gray played bass with The Damned from 1980-83, again in 1989 and once more in 1996; he also played with Eddie & The Hot Rods. Nowadays he's the Regional Officer for the Musicians' Union. Ian Glasper quizzes him about his bass days...

Can you remember when you first picked up a bass guitar?
It was everything to do with seeing T-Rex on *Top Of The Pops*, closely followed by Deep Purple. The bass players all looked so cool... and those big shiny machine heads! I'd already focused in on listening to the bass-lines of songs on the radio, rather than the lyrics or melody – marvellous stuff like 'Aquarius (Let The Sun Shine In)' by the 5th Dimension, all fabulously busy and clacky, which I still love and play to this day.

Tell us about your first bass guitar. Just how bad was it?
It was a cherry red Rosetti and cost £10, a Christmas present from my parents... and that was probably £9 more than it was worth! I was 12, and it was unplayable, although I didn't realise it for about a year. There was no jack plug, the lead was soldered directly onto the volume pot under the scratchplate, and the action was about an inch high. But I thought it was the dog's bollocks! I had no idea how to tune it, so I spent a year plonking along to the B-side of 'Ride A White Swan', which was basically just open E and A, but I had it tuned an octave too low. I figured out all the right poses in front of my bedroom mirror way before I learned how to play it. Then for my 13th birthday I got a 15-watt Dynacord guitar amp with a 10" speaker and a curly lead. The curly lead was very important, because T-Rex had one.

Who were your main influences when you originally started as a bassist?
I was more influenced by the way the bassists looked. The longer the hair and cooler, the better! I guess after buying *Live At Leeds* and *In Search Of Space*, it was John Entwistle and Dave Anderson from Hawkwind who I first tried to copy, closely followed by Slade's Jim Lea. An extraordinary bassist, that fella; his bass drove pretty much every Slade song, and he was so melodic. I was always a big melody fan and intrigued how the bass-lines played off everything else.

What would you say were your best Hot Rods and Damned bass-lines?
It's gotta be 'Beginning Of The End' from the Hot Rods' 1977 album *Life On The Line*; I had so much free space to fill on that and over-played ridiculously, but then I always have and nobody's ever told me to play otherwise, so happy days. That song was pretty much done in the first take, as most of the Hot Rods songs were. As for The Damned, well, that's a hard one, but probably 'Dr Jekyll And Mr Hyde' as it's so atmospheric. Really, they were all a joy to play, and a real gift to me as a bass player as I had so much room. In fact I've been incredibly lucky; I've always been given free rein to play whatever I like in every band I've been in – nobody has ever told me what to play.

And what about your bass-line for 'Life Goes On'... do you think Killing Joke and Nirvana ripped you off for 'Eighties' and 'Come As You Are'?
Haha! I actually talk about this when I visit colleges for the Musician's Union. Someone has put a Youtube video up of all three songs one after the other. It really goes to show how difficult it is to prove copyright infringement. We did ask our publisher back in the day to take the case on, but they chickened out. Funnily enough, Killing Joke actually embarked upon their own litigation against Nirvana for that bass riff, but apparently ran out of dosh and fell out with each other before the case got anywhere – how ironic is that? *[Allegedly, m'lud – Ed.]* So I have to settle for that old adage, that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

What gear do you play these days?
I have four Rickenbackers currently – a fat-neck Mapleglo '74, a '77 Mapleglo with factory toaster and ultra-slim neck, my 1980 Azureglo and one of the McCartney reverse headstock jobs with toaster and horseshoe, which I never play as it rips my hand to shreds. I particularly love the Azureglo and play it to this day; the output is low but it feels like 'my' bass. I've also got an 80s Fender Performer – I'm hanging onto that in the vain hope that some cool new indie band will start playing one and the price will shoot up... and I have a very growly Squier bass I picked up for £40.

No Fenders then?
I've always viewed Fenders a bit like magnolia paint: no particular character and rather bland, and I loathed a Jazz bass I bought and played for a few months back in '75. Controversial, I know, but there you go! And my other favourite is my 1976 Bicentennial Thunderbird; the neck resembles a bit of driftwood, it's so battered, but I used it every gig from '85 until '96 and it's an absolute beauty and still plays like a dream.

Any other gear?
I've never used pedals, I just plug in and go. I have an Ampeg PF500 head via a Sansamp rack into 2x10 and 2x12 TC Electronic cabs, principally because my shoulders are a tad knackered and I can chuck 'em in the back of the car. Unfortunately my hearing problems preclude me doing too much these days... If I didn't have them, who knows? Perhaps I'd still be with The Damned!

Bass Guitar Magazine

VOTE AND WIN!

Our December issue, on sale on November 14, is our 150th – a stellar achievement in the world of publishing! – and to celebrate we'll be publishing two essential lists in that very issue. The first is a run-down of the 150 coolest bass parts ever, and the other is your list of the 150 greatest electric bass players of all time. Both will be chosen by you, the readers, so vote today. You can either use the form below (or a photocopy of it) and post it to Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA, UK or vote online at https://goo.gl/Eu7K3a.

Get your votes in by Friday 29 September* and three entrants randomly picked out of the *BGM* hat will win a Jackson David Ellefson signature bass, each worth around £400. So get your thinking caps on, bassists, we want to hear from you. This is going to be fun (and controversial)!

*For full terms and conditions, see the competition site at the address given above

My nominations for the coolest bass parts ever recorded, 1 being the greatest:

Please supply song title and artist

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

8 _____

9 _____

10 _____

My nominations for the greatest electric bass player ever, 1 being the greatest:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

8 _____

9 _____

10 _____

Thanks for participating, good luck with the competition – and we'll reveal the results in November!

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BAD TO THE BONE

Back with a new album, *Villains*, Queens Of The Stone Age are about to restake their claim as Coolest Rock Band Ever. Bassist Mike Shuman talks tactics with Joel McIver

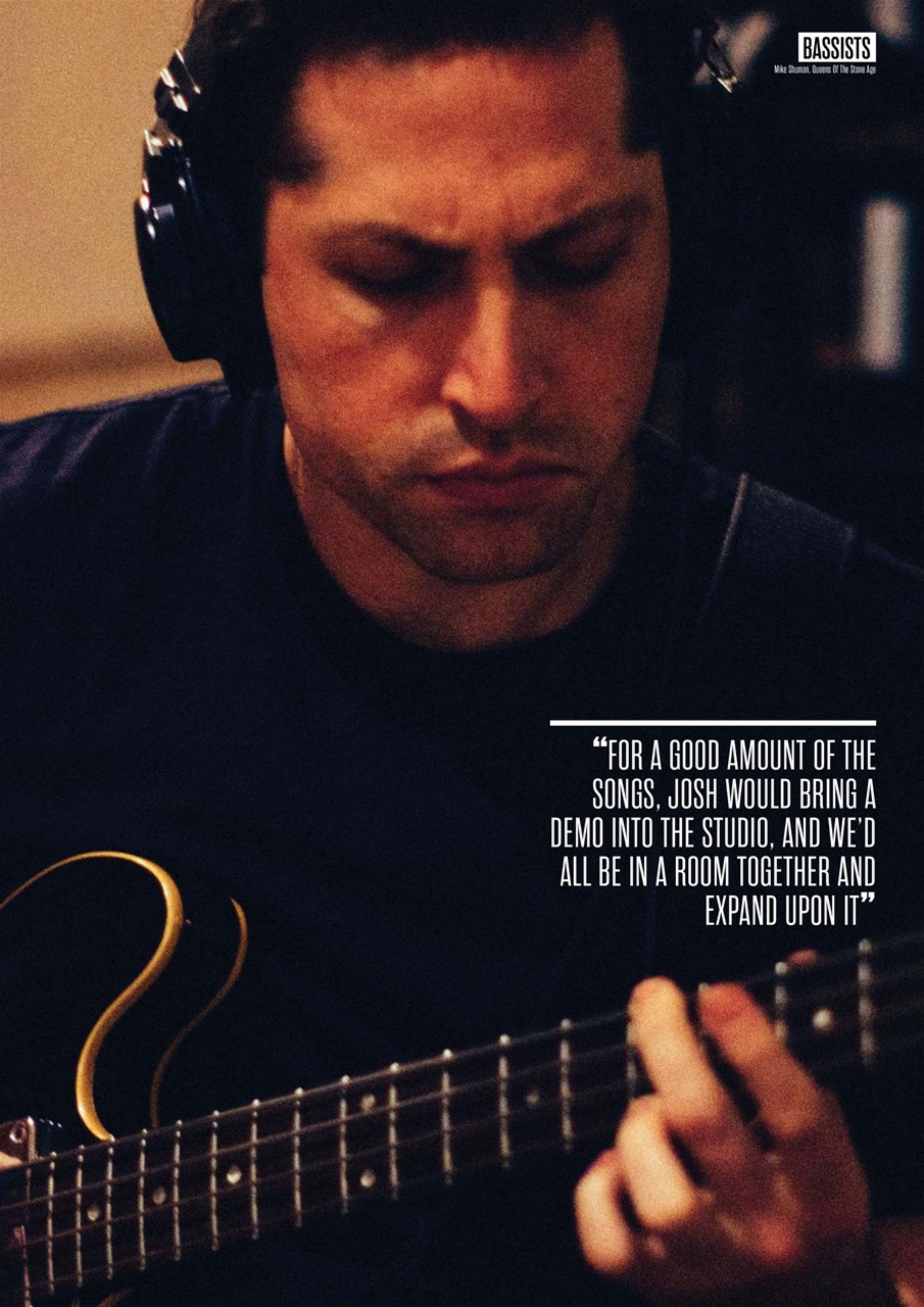
California's Queens Of The Stone Age, now a recording and touring unit for 21 years and counting, are quite the rock phenomenon. Essentially the project of frontman Josh Homme, previously the guitar player in the seminal desert-rock band Kyuss, Queens have enjoyed a revolving-door line-up over the years. Current bassist Mike Shuman has been on board since 2007, and although few would disagree that the group's best albums were recorded from 1998 to 2002 with last month's *BGM* interviewee Nick Oliveri on bass, there's no denying Shuman's skills on the four-string. That's four, never five, as we found out when we caught up with him on the eve of release of QOTSA's new album, *Villains*.

Looking forward to going back on the road?
I haven't played shows in almost two years, so I've been getting back in the saddle. We finished our last cycle and I put out a record from my other band called Mini Mansion. We toured for about a year and I've just been home, scoring some stuff. I also joined Sparks briefly, which was great.

***Villains* has got some amazing bass parts. How do you write them?**
It varies from song to song, but most of the bass-lines on *Villains* were written after the foundations of the song were built. For a good amount of the songs, Josh would bring a demo into the studio, and we'd all be in a room together and expand upon it. 'The Way You Used To Do' was the first song that we knew we were going to do for the record: Josh had a demo of it over two years ago. It had some clapping and three guitars, but no bass, so that was the only song where the bass needed to be created on top of it. That was an interesting one. We got together and tried to be creative and melodic without trampling all over it.

How do you achieve your tone?
Again, we tried to go song by song and see what it needed. We like to take our time and experiment in the studio, and find out what's right for the song. I figure out how to get out of the way of the guitar frequencies, and work out what complements those frequencies. I used two rigs. A lot of the time I used a Guild Maverick, which is an old 60s combo with a single 15" speaker. It's been a Queens' secret for a long time! We wanted to keep on keeping it secret, actually, but when Josh toured with Iggy Pop last year, they took out that amp, so there it was. I'm using two of them live now. I also had a Fender Super Bassman head, a new one, and an old 300-watt Orange head that belongs to Troy [Van Leeuwen, guitarist] that they don't make anymore. I forget the model number, but it's from the early 70s and it is a fuckin' beast! It's got insanely great open, clean sounds, and mixing that with the Maverick – which is all character-driven – gave it enormous depth. That blend was mostly what we did.

What basses do you play?
Guitars were all over the place. I tried a bunch of different stuff. On the song 'Fortress' I used an old Fender Coronado, which I'm a big fan of because they have these woody characteristics. I'm trying to get Fender to do a real one, they keep coming out with these reissues... And there's a lot of Jazz bass, honestly. I never was a Jazz bass fan until the last cycle, and it kinda does everything for me. Even more than a P-Bass. It covers everything I need, and it's always pretty even. Fender made me a couple of Jazz basses, the American series with the 60s neck that are really great. And on this one song, 'Hideaway', I never thought I'd play a fretless bass in my life, but we went for it because it was the right thing to do. I thought it would be a bit like Duran Duran or something – John Taylor is a terrific bass player – so I went for that. We had 12 basses in the studio, and I'd go back and forth until I found the right thing. I was super fortunate.



"FOR A GOOD AMOUNT OF THE SONGS, JOSH WOULD BRING A DEMO INTO THE STUDIO, AND WE'D ALL BE IN A ROOM TOGETHER AND EXPAND UPON IT"

Which of them will you take out on tour?
Well, I can't leave that Jazz bass alone. I'll take a lot of Fenders. Like I said, I have the two Jazz basses, and a 60s-style sparkle gold one that I'm in love with right now.

Then there's my Coronado and my 70s Gibson Ripper, which I'll never leave. I also just started playing a Gretsch Billy Bo bass. The White Falcon was too big for me, so I wanted to try the Billy Bo, which I believe Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top helped to design. It's a really funky-looking red short-scale bass, and I'm playing a few songs on that and really loving it.

How did you get into bass?
I was a guitar player growing up, and playing in punk bands. When I wrote songs, I would write bass parts, and when I was 15 or 16 I started a band called Wires On Fire. I switched to bass because the other guy in the band was a guitar player, and it was the best decision I ever made. I know it sounds like a cliché, but I was young and hungry and I said to myself that I was going to make a point of being original and unique, in a world where it's hard to do that. I was going to do my best to be the best bassist I could be, and try to blend the musical styles that I grew up with and come up with something new. I still really try hard to do that.

Which bassists did you admire?
I was a big Paul McCartney and John Paul Jones fan, as well as guys like Joe Lally from Fugazi and David Sims from the Jesus Lizard. In high school I had a James Jamerson book, and I don't read music great, but I would try my best to learn as many songs as I could of his. To be so busy and to have so many melodic and intricate lines, yet you don't notice them, and they never get in the way, was amazing to me. That was a breakthrough realisation for me: I was like, wow – I can rip balls but not be obnoxious about it. That was a big thing for me.

What was your first bass?
My first bass was my friend's Fender Squier that I played in rehearsals, but the first basses I actually bought for the band were a Music Man and a Fender Aerodyne, which was a mix of a Jazz and a Precision. I learned pretty quickly, because we were writing in a post-hardcore band so I could be weird and fucked up. We played all day, every day, and made our first record when we were 17.

Are you a five-string player?
No, I don't think I could ever do it. I don't think I even understand it. I'm not knocking people who use them, but I don't understand the reason for it. Honestly, in the music that I play, it's not the right tool.

Can you slap?
I can, because I learned to do it as a joke. I can actually do it pretty well, but I would never do it in a real situation. At the same time, that's why I love this record, because we found a spot where it was so weird to pick up a fretless bass that it made sense. You've got to push boundaries, and you also have to push your own boundaries.

What's next?
We've got two years of touring, and we're excited. On this new record, I really got to open up and do my thing the way I wanted. Some of Queens' songs are really structured and need to be done a certain way, and then there's lots of pure freedom where you can do whatever you want.

Villains is out on August 25. Info: www.qotsa.com.

GEAR REVIEWS

Behold our world-beating bass gear review section, where we bring you the crop of each month's new, interesting or otherwise relevant bass guitars, bass amplifiers, bass speakers and bass effects. Occasionally we'll review a guitar effect if it's particularly useful for bassists, and we'll test recording equipment and general accessories every now and then as well, but generally speaking, this zone is for bass-specific gear.

We take the ratings that we give each item very seriously. *BGM* is the only print magazine devoted to bass in this country, and we have readers from all over the world, so we're responsible about our conclusions. If a product is worth your investigation, we'll say so; if it's flawed in some way, we won't hold back from making that clear. We're not beholden to advertisers in any way and our conclusions are entirely independent of the views of manufacturers, musicians and distributors.

When you read about a bass-related product here, you know you're getting a sensible, balanced review from an experienced bass tester. Value for money is at the top of our agenda in these cash-strapped times, but on the other hand, we believe in paying for quality.

Right, that's enough from me. Remember, this is just about the only place that it's good to have GAS!*

Joel McIver, editor

*GAS = Gear Acquisition Syndrome (a malaise often suffered by bass players)

SQUIER Vintage Modified Jaguar

BSX Allegro 4 Electric Upright

ANACONDA Tribute J5E Elite

FENDER Geddy Lee Signature Jazz

DINGWALL ABI 5/3

SQUIER

Vintage Modified Jaguar

Short-scale basses are in fashion at the moment – but do they sacrifice tone for playability? Mike Brooks finds out

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Anything that draws people to the world of bass and makes them want to play one is a good thing by our reckoning. The easy playability of short-scale instruments makes them popular among bassists who find a long scale tricky to navigate and manufacturers have been quick to recognise this, with the number of available short-scale models increasing in the past year or two. It's no surprise that Squier have now joined the party, with their 30" scale Vintage Modified Jaguar coming in at a pocket-friendly £187. Of course, alongside the sleek playability of short-scale basses, there's often a compromise in tone due to the shorter speaking length of the strings – so does this Jaguar offer serious bite?

Build Quality

The bass has been made in Indonesia, and it's basically well assembled, although some short cuts have been taken as you might expect. Agathis has been used as the body wood, which is a cheap timber option, but for the purposes of this bass, it suits the requirements adequately. It comes finished in a black polyurethane gloss along with a matching headstock, while the distinctive Jaguar body shape always stands out from the crowd. Rear contouring and the upper body bout chamfer are in place, although the upper and lower cutaways are minimal at best. It's an unusual instrument in some ways. Its three-ply pickguard seems oddly shaped to us, and many of the components are visibly low-budget. For example, the standard Fender-style bridge is merely adequate, and although the elephant-ear machine heads are securely fitted, the A-string tuner on our review model was loose and slack in operation. Fortunately, the four-bolt neck pocket is a tight connection, while the polyurethane finished neck with its slim dimensions and 'C'-shaped neck profile give the bass a sleek playability and feel. With a nut width of 38mm, it feels similar to a Jazz bass at the 'working' end of the neck and the setup is generally good, with a reasonable action and no sharp fret ends.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £187
Made In | Indonesia
Colour | Black
Body | Agathis
Neck | Maple, 30" scale
Neck Joint | Bolt on, four-bolt attachment
Nut Width | 38mm
Fingerboard | Rosewood
Frets | 20
Pickups | 1 x split-coil pickup, 1 x single-coil pickup
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Volume, volume, tone
Hardware | Chrome hardware, Fender elephant-ear machine heads, standard bridge
Weight | 3.7 kg
Case/gig bag included | No
Left-hand option available | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | A good all-round bass that won't break your budget or your back
Minus | Some quality control issues let it down
Overall | The Jaguar does reasonably well, with a good selection of tones and solid playability

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

Sounds And Playability

Obviously, the first thing that strikes you about any short-scale instrument is the reduced dimensions of the neck, as well as the weight benefits and balance. Once you start playing this bass, you begin to realise how tight the finger spacing and fret placement are, most tangibly from the middle of the neck upwards towards the body. Acoustically, the bass sounds punchy and responsive without sounding too woolly: this is confirmed upon plugging into an amp. The tones and general character are fine: it's just the feel of the instrument that is different to a regular 34" scale bass.

The general tone of each pickup is solid and usable, with the response across all four strings bright and resonant. The neck based split-coil gives the bass a warm, rounded bottom end with some low-mid punch, while the bridge-located single-coil offers a characteristically brighter tone with some midrange honk for good measure. Dialling in different amounts of volume to each pickup highlights the general tonal palette. Although the first volume control and tone control operate smoothly, with a gradual increase and decrease in level, the second volume pot seems to be more of an on/off affair – another cut corner, perhaps.

Thankfully, the tone control offers plenty of light and shade; roll it off and you're presented with a fat, warm bass signal. Dub, reggae, blues and soul players who don't want top-end sparkle will enjoy this tone. Gradually opening the control up brings some rasp and grit: this becomes particularly noticeable if you play with a pick. If you're looking for rocky, punky clank, then open the tone control up fully and go for it.

> "THE REAL DIFFERENCE COMES IN THE FEEL AND PHYSICAL NATURE OF THIS INSTRUMENT. I CAN CERTAINLY SEE THIS JAGUAR APPEALING TO FIRST TIMERS, OR AS A PRACTICE BASS AROUND THE HOUSE"

Conclusion

To summarise, the sounds on offer here aren't radically different from those of a long-scale model or a passive bass of a similar configuration. The real difference comes in the feel and physical nature of this instrument. I can certainly see this Jaguar appealing to first timers, or as a practice bass around the house. Squiers tend to be a mixed bag, with certain models blowing the competition away, so as with any bass, take each instrument on its own merits. If possible, try out several examples of the same bass if you can: you may notice differences in weight, tone and performance. Some of the short cuts made here detract from the package – but at a measly £187, you pay your money and you take your choice.

The revenge *of all those* trees *that fell in the forest but were* never *heard*

Model Shown: SL4NTFMFBG Spector Legend 4 - Neck Thru - Faded Blue

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BSX

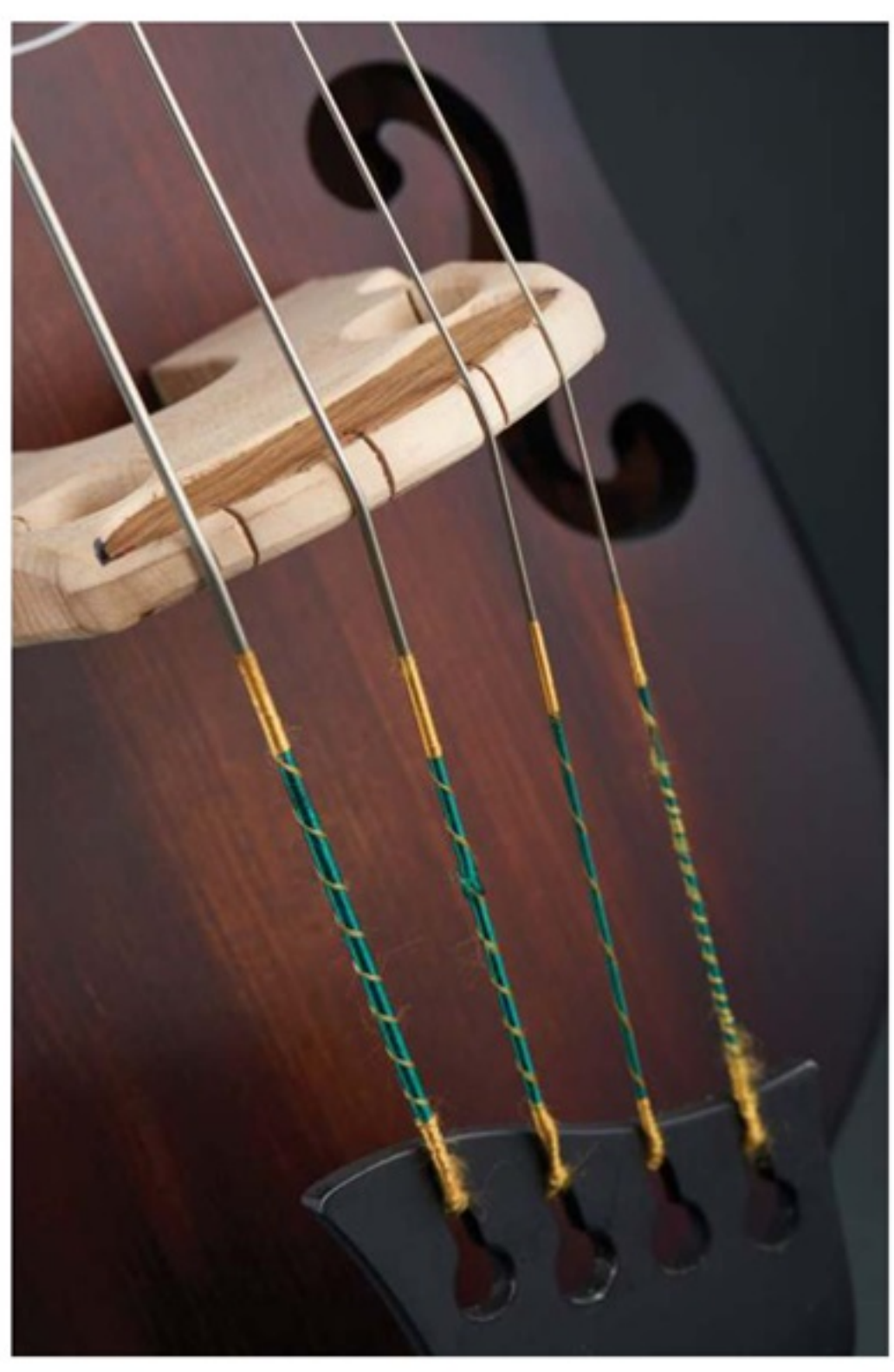
Allegro 4 Electric Upright

If the thought of transporting an upright bass fills you with dread, the BSX Allegro may be the answer to your prayers. Mike Brooks dons his overalls for some bass DIY

Bass Direct
www.bassdirect.co.uk

£2499

We can fully appreciate why the bass tones of an upright instrument are so popular and still very firmly in demand. However, the daunting size, restrictive dimensions and pain in the posterior involved in transporting your beloved upright from home to rehearsals, recording sessions and live engagements is more than enough to put a lot of bassists off the idea. For those reasons, this Allegro electric upright might just tickle your fancy – but the only thing is, you have to assemble it yourself! Now before you baulk at the idea, this reviewer thought the same thing when faced with the large brown packing box. However, with the various elements laid out on the floor and the instructions at hand, I quickly assembled an electric upright bass. And before you ask – no, there weren't any surplus parts!



Build Quality

I'll be honest, I had my doubts as to the quality of the components when I first read about this instrument – but I needn't have worried, and on putting the instrument together, I was surprised by the quality and sturdiness of the parts. The maple neck, with its rich, dark ebony fingerboard, is easily attached using a single large bolt and once tightly seated in the neck pocket, the fit is very snug: the neck isn't going to shift.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £2499
Made In | USA
Colour | Tobacco burst
Body | Five-ply baltic birch, spruce top, formed maple sides
Neck | Maple, 41.5" scale
Neck Joint | Bolt-on, one-bolt attachment
Nut Width | 41mm
Fingerboard | Ebony
Frets | 24
Pickups | Multi-sensor piezo bridge
Electronics | Active Bartolini 3-band EQ, individual string volumes
Controls | Master volume, 3-band EQ (bass/middle/treble cut/boost), individual volume control for each string
Hardware | Black Hipshot elephant-ear machine heads
Weight | 6.8 kg
Case/gig bag included | Custom gig bag
Left-hand option available | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Works very well, sounds very good and is easily transported
Minus | At a snip under £2500, it isn't cheap
Overall | Impressive, with a flexible array of upright tones, easily built and broken down and very well thought out

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

A stomach rest is also fitted to the rear of the instrument to make resting the bass against the player's body a relatively comfortable experience.

The antique-like tobacco burst finish gives the spruce top, maple sides and baltic birch body a traditional look, as do the F-holes in the front facing of the body, although other colours and finishes are available if you prefer a more modern look. Although the handmade curvaceous body is sizeable, with a bass bar and sound post fitted internally, it obviously isn't as domineering as a traditional upright instrument and in terms of weight, it is manageable, weighing in at a respectable 6.8 kilos. The D'Addario Helicore Hybrid strings are partially fitted at the headstock requiring the player to install them at the bridge and bring them up to concert pitch or to whichever tuning you prefer.

The controls sit alongside the side edge facing the player, and provide a master volume and three-band EQ with cut and boost courtesy of the Bartolini active circuit and multi-sensor piezo bridge. Additionally, the volume of each string can be adjusted individually by a set of controls housed in the rear of the instrument in a separate control cavity. Once the output level is set to a suitably even response across all four strings, the master volume determines the overall output.

Sounds And Playability

You'll be pleased to know that this bass didn't disintegrate the moment I started playing it. In fact, it felt reassuringly sturdy. Even before amplifying the Allegro, its natural sustain and thick, woody tone stands out a mile. It's incredibly resonant and vibrant, as it should be, and in a very pleasing way – which is a good indicator that, despite the self-assembly nature of this bass, the sum of the parts works and performs without any underlying issues.

With the EQ set flat, I plugged the Allegro in and was deeply impressed by its tonal display. The bass tone is rich and warm but solid; the midrange provides some projection and presence; and the top end is smooth and clear without sounding nasal. It sounds as if the instrument has its own voice: as you become familiar with how it plays, manipulating the tones to your requirements allows the instrument to breathe. The Bartolini EQ gives the player plenty of room to manoeuvre in most musical contexts. As the bass is well shielded to prevent unwanted noise and feedback, some care should be taken when boosting the lows and highs: a little adjustment across all three EQ bands goes a long way. Thankfully, the Bartolini circuit complements the piezo system, maintaining the organic tones very well.

Conclusion

The Allegro concept seems like a very good idea to me, and a welcome solution to the intrinsic problems with most upright instruments. Although the optional tripod stand and thigh rest are additional purchases, the components you are provided with are more than enough to get you up and running quickly. If the action isn't to your liking, the angle of the neck can be adjusted to suit your preference by way of a pivot system. This is very much an intelligent design and clearly, much thought has gone into it. It's both interesting and impressive, and we suggest you check one out if a venture into the upright world is calling you.

GREATNESS
IS IN THE DETAILS

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Mark bass Preamp Inside

MK-1 PICKUPS

bartolini Pickups & Electronics

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OPTIMIZED TUSQ NUT

graphtech

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TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £2600
Made In | UK
Colour | Purple candy burst
Body | Swamp ash
Neck | Five-piece flame maple and wenge laminates, 34.5" scale
Neck Joint | Bolt-on, five-bolt attachment
Nut Width | 48mm
Fingerboard | Maple
Frets | 24
Pickups | Delano PMVC 5 FE hum canceller x 1, Delano JMVC5 FE/AS twin coil in-line hum canceller x 1
Electronics | Glockenklang three-band with three mid-centre switch
Controls | Volume, pickup pan, three-band EQ (bass/middle/treble), mid-centre selector switch
Hardware | Gold hardware, Hipshot Ultralite elephant-ear machine heads, Hipshot A-style bridge
Weight | 4.1kg
Case/gig bag included | Soft case
Left-hand option available | Yes, as a custom order

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Stunning looks, fabulous sounds and tones
Minus | Nothing
Overall | A fine instrument in every respect and a joy to play

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

ANACONDA
Tribute J5E Elite

Custom five-string basses are always attention-grabbing — and this slithery example from Anaconda is no different. Mike Brooks sheds some skin... from his fingertips

Anaconda Basses
www.anacondabasses.co.uk

£2600

This particular Anaconda was presented to us at the LBGS back in March and although it's a custom order, it is a good indication of where this particular range sits in the catalogue. The Tribute range tips its hat to the classic Jazz basses of the past while offering its own unique slant. This particular model incorporates an interesting electronics package as well as some visual knockout elements, and has been designed to the customer's specifications as a working professional. Playability and flexibility were high on the list – so let's see how it weighs up.

Build Quality

Resplendent in a purple candy burst finish and with a satin lacquer, this is a highly enjoyable bass to wear and play. The dark figuring of the swamp ash body stands out a mile without the clear scratchplate spoiling the

visuals: the balance is good and the bass sits perfectly. Although the shape is similar to the usual offset Jazz body, it is rounded and contoured for comfort and feels exceptionally smooth. The deep lower cutaway offers unhindered access to the dusty end of the 24-fret maple fingerboard.

The shallow D-shaped neck profile is very accommodating, the five-piece flame maple and wenge laminates adding a touch of visual class. With a 48mm nut width, 19mm string spacing, satin finished neck and a broad fingerboard, this feels like a real player's neck: it isn't cumbersome or overly bulky, but hits the bullseye in terms of left-hand comfort and manoeuvrability. The level of neck finishing is exemplary: there are no sharp fret ends, as expected, and there's a slinky action with no buzzes anywhere on the neck. Offset ebony piano marker inlays adorn the fingerboard, while white Luminlay markers have been used on the side: there's also a brass nut.

Delano pickups have been matched with a three-band Glockenklang preamp which also offers a three-position switch: this selects three different mid frequency settings for boosting or cutting. Gold hardware has been used throughout, the machine heads and bridge being Hipshot

products. The controls, like the machine heads, are securely fitted and operate very smoothly indeed, with pots for volume, pickup pan, bass, middle and treble and the aforementioned mid-EQ selector all located closely together.

Sounds And Playability

Tested through an Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 and a pair of SL112 cabinets, this is one lively bass! Before plugging in, it's clear that this is a bass with its own voice and tone. The lively bounce of the five-bolt neck attachment is one element, and the choice of timber and neck lamination is another, offering solidity and consistency of performance along with a strong definition of tone, particularly in the midrange. The whole instrument vibrates and resonates against the player's body, always a good sign.

With both the Aguilar system and Glockenklang preamp set flat, the attention to detail in the construction is matched by the sonic details – the flat response brought a smile to this reviewer's face immediately. The bottom end is tight but powerfully rounded without being boomy or excessive; the midrange is tightly focused; and the highs can be whatever you want them to be, as there is plenty of cut and boost to facilitate your requirements. The B string stands out very well should you need it to, but if you prefer for it to be present in a more subtle manner, work with the mid-EQ to get the tone you require. Talking of midrange, the selector switch is a flexible and sensible option, as the frequencies selected give the bass a bright boost in the upper mids, a central mid frequency colour or a sizeable low-mid boost. Used sensibly, this is a real plus point.

The whole package has obviously had some forethought expended on it and the result is a highly playable five-string that will work in virtually any musical situation. Playability is sublime, the comfort element has been addressed and fulfilled, and the materials and electronics package give the player a highly pleasing selection of sounds.

Conclusion

This is another fine example of the work coming through the Anaconda workshop in North London. Once more, luthier Andrew Taylor-Cummings has created a sumptuous instrument: little wonder that it had the crowds talking at the LBGS back in March. It's a sturdily assembled bass: so much about this instrument feels and sounds right that it is very difficult to find any negative points, try as we might! The lucky owner definitely had some firm ideas as to what he wanted and with this bass, Andrew has brought those ideas to life. Very impressive.

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FENDER

Geddy Lee Signature Jazz

Think you've played every great Jazz bass? Think again, says Mike Brooks...

Guitar Guitar
www.guitarguitar.co.uk

£901

Nineteen years after its initial launch, the Geddy Lee Signature Jazz bass is here to stay – and, alongside the Marcus Miller model, is probably the most successful signature bass Fender have ever produced. Based on Geddy's own 70s Jazz, to which he returned in the mid-90s after an extended period using Wal basses, this Mexican version is less than half the price of the US-made model. On first appearances, it doesn't look any worse for it – and with the Rush bassist's model remaining very popular, we thought it was about time we gave the current incarnation a thorough investigation.

Build Quality

Supplied in a deluxe Fender gigbag, the Geddy Jazz's general design and shape is what you would expect from a J-Bass of this era, with black binding and block markers, open-gear elephant-ear tuners, plus a reasonable weight and balance. In fact, without a strap, the headstock bias is significant – but even at 4.2 kilos, once placed on a strap, the bass sits proudly against the player's body. Geddy's signature is tastefully engraved into the High-Mass bridge, developed with him for these instruments, and printed on the back of the headstock.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £901
Made In | Mexico
Colour | Black
Body | Alder
Neck | Maple, 34" scale
Neck Joint | Bolt-on, four-bolt attachment
Nut Width | 38mm
Fingerboard | Maple
Frets | 20
Pickups | 2 x American vintage single-coil pickups
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Volume, volume, tone
Hardware | Chrome hardware, Fender elephant-ear machine heads, Fender High-Mass bridge
Weight | 4.2 kg
Case/gig bag included: | Deluxe gigbag
Left-hand option available | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | A standout performer with rip roaring tones and playability
Minus | Nothing
Overall | An exceptional Jazz which blows any preconceptions to smithereens

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

"I'VE SEEN THE LIGHT, THAT'S FOR SURE. I'M ASTONISHED BY WHAT AN EXCEPTIONAL BASS THIS IS IN ITS OWN RIGHT"

The black polyester finished alder body – also available in a three-colour sunburst – has all the hallmarks of a Jazz bass, such as great upper and lower cutaways, contouring and chamfering front and back for comfort, and a three-ply scratchplate for that simple but effective look. The black plastic volume and tone controls sit on top of the chrome control plate and operate very smoothly, with a gradual increase and decrease when turned.

The slim Jazz neck (as though it would be anything else!) has a highly playable, thin C-shaped profile and comes with a urethane finish which gives it a welcoming feel. The setup is very good, neither low nor high, the 20mm string spacing works perfectly and the synthetic bone nut has been cut very well indeed. The four-bolt neck pocket is tight and secure, and the machine heads are sturdily attached and operate in a very reassuring fashion – no string slippage on this bass. The vintage vibe is kept in check with the aforementioned black neck binding, black block markers on the front of the maple neck and fingerboard, and white dots positioned in the binding.

Sounds And Playability

Much has been said about these basses over the years – but I have to say, right from the off, this bass is impressive. Even in acoustic mode, it has a biting sparkle that I've not heard often from a Jazz bass, and to quantify this point, I compared it with several other Jazz basses of various periods and famous connections. None of them sounded like this one. In fact, I'd go as far to say that this may be the most resonant and vibrant Jazz bass I've ever played – the bounce and sparkle was outrageously forthright. All for £900!

With a signature tone, plugging in just amplified the characteristics I had already heard, but now with added low midrange, a smooth bass response and a clarity and playability that simply took my breath away. Soloing each of the American Vintage single coil pickups shows what is on offer tonally: I was surprised with how focused the performance from each pickup was. Sometimes, single coil units can be lacking in certain departments – warmth, brittle top end, indistinct mids – but Fender have fitted this bass with a pair of absolute crackers.

Fingerstyle tones are punchy and full, while pick players will enjoy the grit and power on tap, which is very pleasing from a passive instrument. The quality of tone and percussive performance should equally appeal to the slappers and tappers among you. Having spent some time with this bass, it is easy to see, and hear, exactly why Geddy returned to using his Jazz basses – and considering that this is the cheaper model in the range, I wonder what the results would be if I lined up 10 examples of this Mexican model and compared them against each other. Based on this specimen, this bass really can do it all.

Conclusion

Over the years, having heard so many players rave about these basses, I really couldn't see what the fuss was about. Another passive Jazz, based on Geddy's bass, what's the big deal? Well, I've seen the light, that's for sure. I'm astonished by what an exceptional bass this is in its own right, even without the celebrity link. For the price, I think you'll struggle to find a better instrument, or one with as much tonal guts, sparkle and all-round playability as this one. It's everything a great bass should be, and it's an absolute steal. Buy with confidence!

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WIDTH 7.87 in / 20 cm

Richard Bona
RICHARD BONA signature

WARNING

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> MASSIVE AMOUNT OF POWER
> SERIOUS HEADROOM
> SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE CONTROLS
> ULTRA-COMPACT SIZE AND LIGHTWEIGHT
> NO COMPROMISE

WEIGHT 6.39 lbs / 2,9 kg

DINGWALL
AB1 5/3

Would we like to check out a five-string with looks, playability and tone to die for? We sure would. Mike Brooks was sent to investigate

Bass Direct
www.bassdirect.co.uk

£3599

We've taken a look at several different Dingwalls over the past few years, and one feature that comes across time and again is the level of consistency in construction, playability and the palette of useful sounds. Sheldon Dingwall's approach to bass guitar design is based upon identifying problems that he has seen in other instruments and applying the solutions to his own basses: that ethos filters through the whole Dingwall catalogue, and this particular five-string is no exception. This example from the After Burner range is particularly eye-catching but with a pricetag in excess of £3500, you would expect serious bells and whistles here and there. How does it measure up?

Build Quality

As this bass has been hand-crafted in Canada, it's not surprising that great attention to detail has been paid here. The blackburst quilted/burl maple top facing has a slight purple hue around the edges, while the figuring stands out, rather like a three-dimensional glacier. The curvaceous body shape works on a number of levels, not least because the rear and front contouring tick both the aesthetic and comfort boxes. The extensive cutaways and elongated top horn offer unhindered access to the upper frets and benefit the overall balance of the instrument.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £3599
Made In | Canada
Colour | Blackburst
Body | Alder with quilt/burl maple 'X' top, two-piece body
Neck | Wenge, 34"-37" scale
Neck Joint | Bolt-on, four-bolt attachment
Nut Width | 52mm
Fingerboard | Wenge
Frets | 24
Pickups | Dingwall FD-3 pickups x 3
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Volume, pickup selector, passive tone, series/parallel selector switch x 3
Hardware | Black hardware, Hipshot Ultralite machine heads, custom Dingwall bridge
Weight | 4 kg
Case/gig bag included | Levy's padded gigbag
Left-hand option available | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | A bass that ticks all the boxes
Minus | The pricetag reflects the craftsmanship... but feel the quality!
Overall | A high-quality bass that delivers on all fronts

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

With pearl position markers on the front and side of the richly coloured wenge neck, the shallow, slim D-shaped neck profile makes for superbly comfortable playing. Despite the increased neck dimensions associated with a five-string, the neck fits the player's hand like a glove. The 19mm string spacing obviously contributes to this: the fingerboard only broadens marginally as it extends to join the body. As five-string necks go, this is an absolute beauty. The level of finishing is exceptional, with rounded fret ends and a highly playable action.

Black hardware is used throughout, with Hipshot Ultralites and a custom Dingwall bridge unit. There are three controls, with volume and passive tone controls flanking the pickup selector. The player can isolate the neck or bridge pickup; select bridge and middle pickups in series for a Music Man tone; or choose bridge and neck pickups in parallel to create a Jazz tone. To supplement this, three selector switches allow individual parallel and series settings for each pickup. Don't be put off by the fact that this is a passive instrument – there are plenty of tone-shaping options.

Sounds And Playability

The fanned fret neck and 37" to 34" scale length – which follows the same principles as piano stringing – means that the lower strings make great use of the increased scale length. The quality of their tone is exceptional due to the extra speaking length: naturally, the B string is the most significant beneficiary. Its tonal performance is extremely pleasing. The wenge neck gives the bass a natural throatiness that combines a gritty bite with a warm delivery, and acoustically, this bass resonates very well.

Plugging in, we're met with a rich bass tone that covers the full frequency spectrum, from rounded lows to solid mids that pack a real sonic punch. Sparkling highs ring out and sustain, while harmonics and overtones are prominent. After playing the bass for a period of time, it felt and sounded pleasingly familiar. The series/parallel switches provide plenty of tonal flexibility, although you'll need to put in some experimentation time to fully appreciate how each pickup responds to both settings. Parallel generally sounds more refined and polite compared to series, which turbocharges the power and low-mid grunt. Obviously, the positioning of each pickup has a major effect on the sounds available – so get to know each pickup setting, and how the selector switches combine, in order to fully appreciate the instrument's capabilities.

This is a remarkably responsive bass. Running through each pickup option highlights the diverse assortment of tones available. If you're looking for traditional plummy tones, that requirement is catered for, but this bass is a highly capable all-round performer that truly delivers – no matter what your playing style or musical preference.

Conclusion

I've been suitably impressed with each Dingwall I've had the privilege to review, and this AB1 model is no different. Okay, the pricetag will place it outside most budgets – but as I said when I reviewed the Z3 model, you really do get what you pay for: quality, comfort, supreme playability, an impressive tonal palette and looks to die for. I suggest you take a look and see what the fuss is about.

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BASS TUITION

Making you a better bass player

Welcome to our redesigned tuition section, in which *Bass Guitar Magazine* collates the wit and wisdom of the *crème de la crème* of the electric and upright bass world. We're fortunate enough to have some serious talent on the team, from world-class music educators to experienced touring musicians, who between them have laid down the low notes in every studio, club and arena in the civilised world. Note that we've divided the columns according to Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced level for easy reference. Whether you're looking to improve your playing technique, expand your awareness of theory, set up your rig to sound like your particular bass hero or simply get on a bus and tour, we provide the answers you need here. What are you waiting for? Dive in...
Joel McIver, editor

Kickstart your journey to the top of the bass world here!
Steve Lawson is the UK's most celebrated solo bass guitarist. Across 17 years of touring, and 42 solo and collaborative albums, he's built up a worldwide audience for his looping and processing approach to bass sound. Recent collaborators include Beardyman, Reeves Gabrels, Andy Gangadeen, Tanya Donelly, Divinity Roxx and Jonas Hellborg. He been teaching bass for over two decades, and lectures at universities and colleges across the globe. Victor Wooten once commented, 'Steve Lawson is a brilliant musician. I've known about him and listened to him for many years. He may not be one of the most famous bassists – but he is definitely one of the most talented'. Who are we to argue?
www.stevelawson.net

STEVE LAWSON

Beginners 74

Now you're rolling with theory and techniques, it's time to hit the next level
Stuart Clayton has been a professional musician, writer and transcriber since 2002 and has worked in almost every conceivable musical situation – function bands, cruise ship gigs, theatre shows and more. He spent four years recording and touring the world with legendary Emerson, Lake & Palmer drummer Carl Palmer and has worked for BGM since its first issue. Since 2007 Stuart has worked as the Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Bristol, where he continues to teach all levels of the degree course. In addition, he has also worked as the Bass Guitar Technical Specialist for the Rockschool exam board. Stuart now runs Bassline Publishing, which publishes transcription books for legendary bassists such as Mark King, Marcus Miller, Stuart Hamm, Bernard Edwards, Stuart Zender and John Entwistle, as well as an acclaimed range of tuition books.

STUART CLAYTON

Intermediate 78

Take the bass world by storm with the ultimate tuition section
Philip Mann studied at Basstech, completing the London College of Music's bachelor's degree programme, secured a master's degree in performance and receiving a scholarship to study under Jeff Berlin at the Players School of Music in Florida. He then established himself as a busy electric and double bassist. Endorsed by Overwater and Vanderkley, he has appeared in London's West End and across Europe on many productions. His performance and session credits include recording at the legendary Sun Studios in Memphis, and working with Greek fusion guitarist Tolis Zavaliaris and the Big Band Metheny ensemble. He has featured as a solo demonstration artist at the London Bass Guitar Show every year from 2012. Currently, he is a member of the visiting faculty at the Players School of Music and lectures for Scott's Bass Lessons.

PHIL MANN

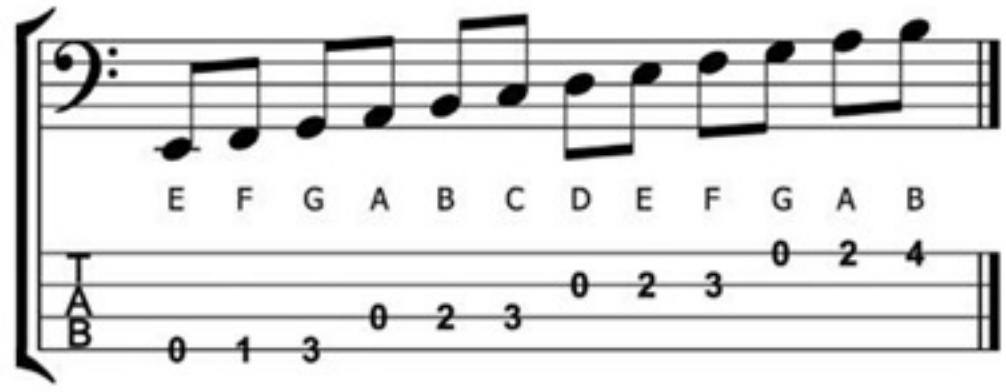
Advanced 84

BGM Notation Legend

The following is a guide to the notation symbols and terminology used in *Bass Guitar Magazine*

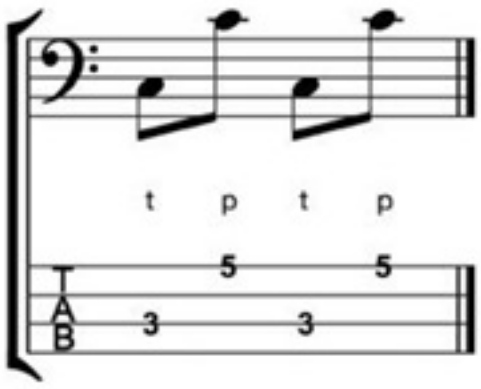
The Stave: most music written for the bass guitar uses the bass clef. The example to the right shows the placement of the notes on the stave.

Tablature: this is a graphical representation of the music. Each horizontal line corresponds with a string on the bass guitar, with the lowest line representing the lowest pitched string (E). The numbers represent the frets to be played. Numbers stacked vertically indicate notes that are played together. Where basses with five or six strings are required, the tablature stave will have five or six lines as necessary.

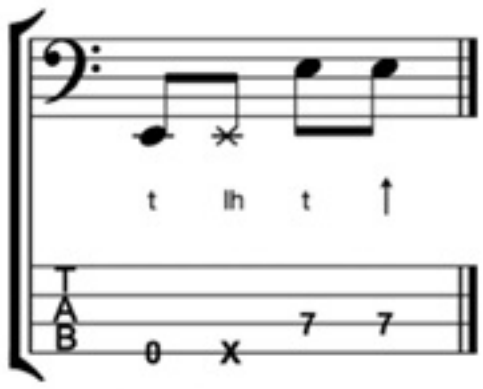


Notes shown in brackets indicate that a note has been tied over from a previous bar.

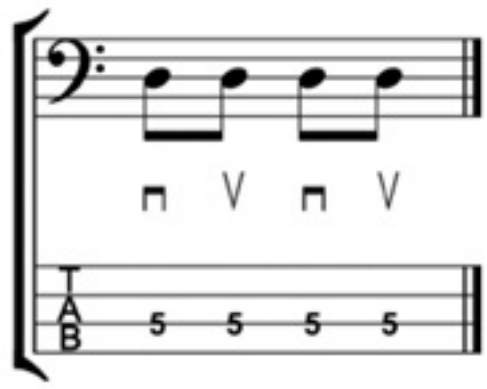
PLAYING TECHNIQUES



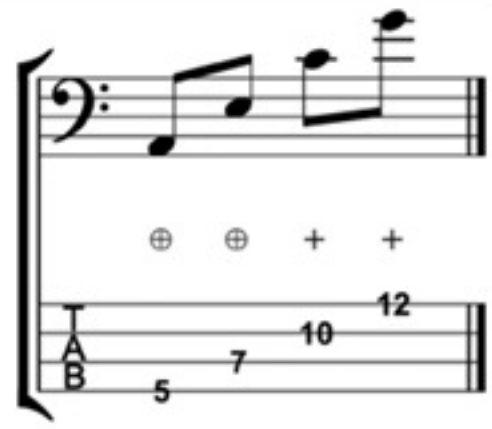
SLAP AND POP TECHNIQUE
Notes slapped with the thumb are marked with a 't', notes popped with the fingers marked with a 'p'



ADVANCED SLAP TECHNIQUE
Fretting hand slaps are marked 'lh' and double thumbing upstrokes are shown with an upward pointing arrow

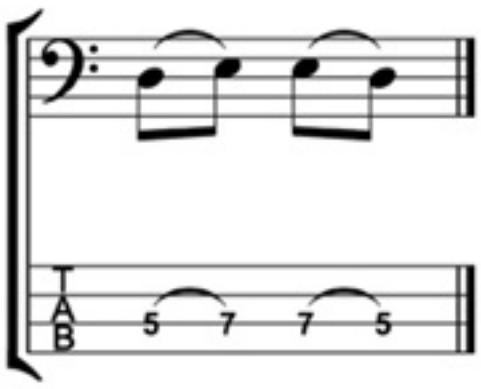


PLECTRUM TECHNIQUE
Where necessary, down and upstrokes with the pick will be shown using these symbols (down-up-down-up)

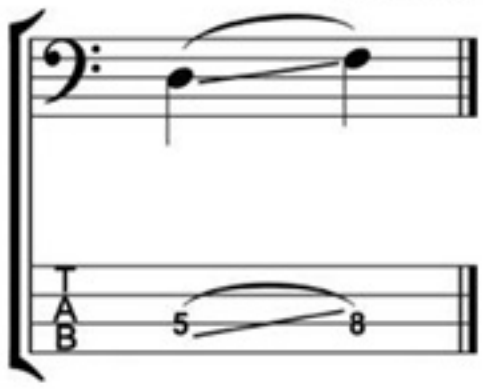


TAPPING TECHNIQUES
Fretting hand taps are shown with a '+' in a circle. Picking hand taps are shown with '+'. Specific fingers will be shown with numbers if necessary

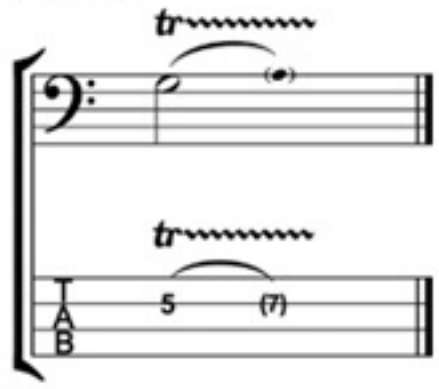
FRETTING TECHNIQUES



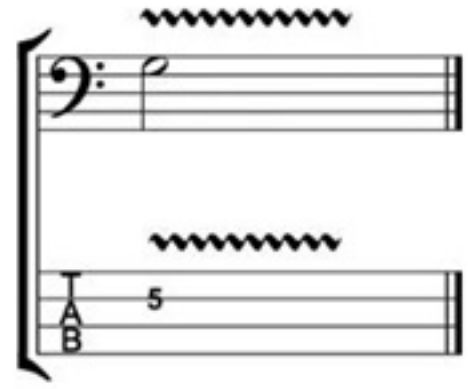
HAMMER-ON AND PULL-OFF
Hammer-ons and pull-offs are shown with a slur over the notes. Only the first note is plucked by the picking hand



SLIDE (GLISSANDO)
Slides are performed by playing the first note then sliding the fretting finger up to the second note

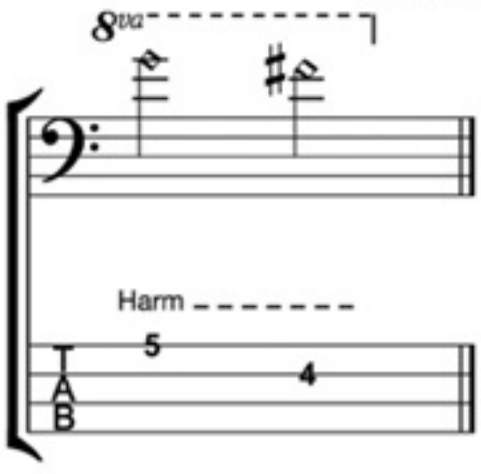


TRILLS
Trills are performed by rapidly alternating between the two notes shown using hammer-ons and pull-offs

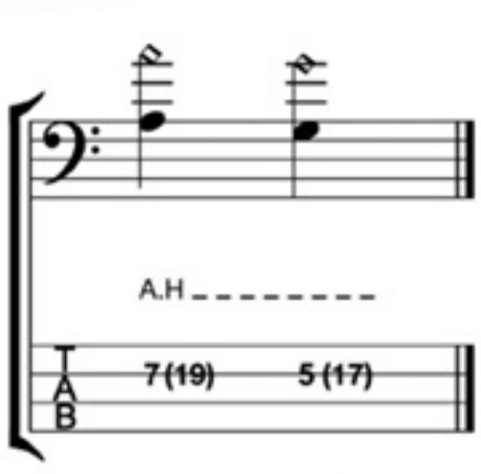


VIBRATO
The pitch of the note is altered by repeatedly bending the string up and back with the fretting finger

PLAYING HARMONICS

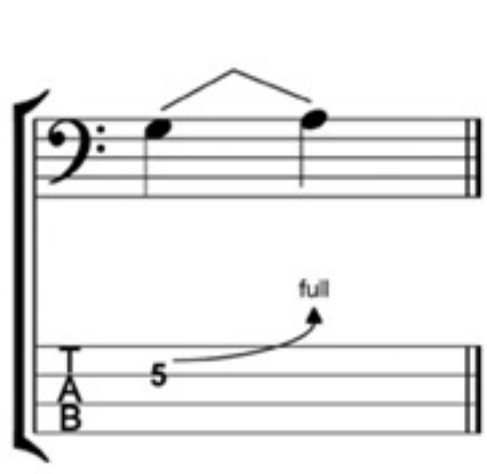


NATURAL HARMONICS
The note is played as a harmonic by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated

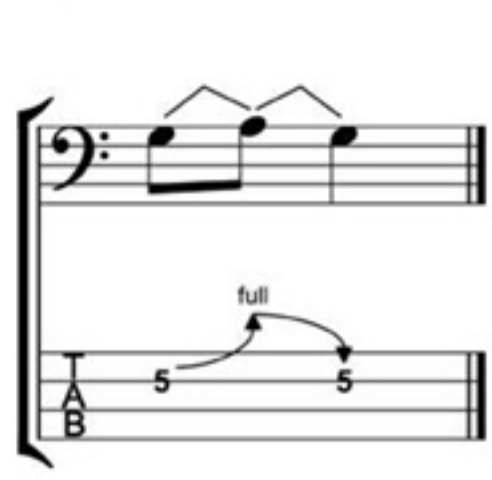


ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS
Pluck the string while fretting the lower note and placing the edge of the picking hand thumb an octave higher (the note shown in brackets)

BENDING NOTES



BEND
The note is bent upwards to the interval specified: ½ = semitone, full = tone



BEND AND RELEASE
The note is bent up to the interval indicated then released back to its original pitch

THE FRONT LINE

Want to make it as a professional bassist? Listen up as BGM's world-class bass team reports back from the tourbus

THE JAZZ BASSIST

RUTH GOLLER

Spinning out the jazz toons with hep cat Ruth

I've just spent a few days in the studio with Let Spin, a collective band that I've been playing with for about five years. All of us have written tunes for our third album: we're really looking forward to releasing this new material. The first two albums came together quite naturally, but with this one we really set out to do something new by pushing our boundaries. I've found it very difficult to write material for this album, as I really wanted to take my music to another level in terms of composition and performance.

As a bass player, I have a particular compositional approach, often starting with a bass-line or melody. This can sometimes make my tunes sound as if they're all coming from a similar direction. This time, I decided to compose while concentrating on all the other instruments first, and trying to use the bass in a way that is completely new to me. For example, for one song I wrote a melody line for alto saxophone and guitar and split it between the two, while requiring them to play in the same octave and hold their notes at the end of each phrase. This way they merged into each other, almost as if they were creating a new instrument between them. For myself, I decided not to play any bass-lines at all, so as not to outline the general harmonic changes. This is what I would usually do to bind the whole tune together, especially as my melodies can be quite edgy. I've also been experimenting with a few pedals recently, and have fallen in love with the EHX Freeze pedal. It's really opened the door to a new sonic environment for me. I've also added a whammy pedal and my usual distortion to the chain, so I now have a lot of opportunity to create extremely diverse frequencies. My instrument might not sound like a traditional bass, but it has been great for me to see how far I can take it away from its usual role.

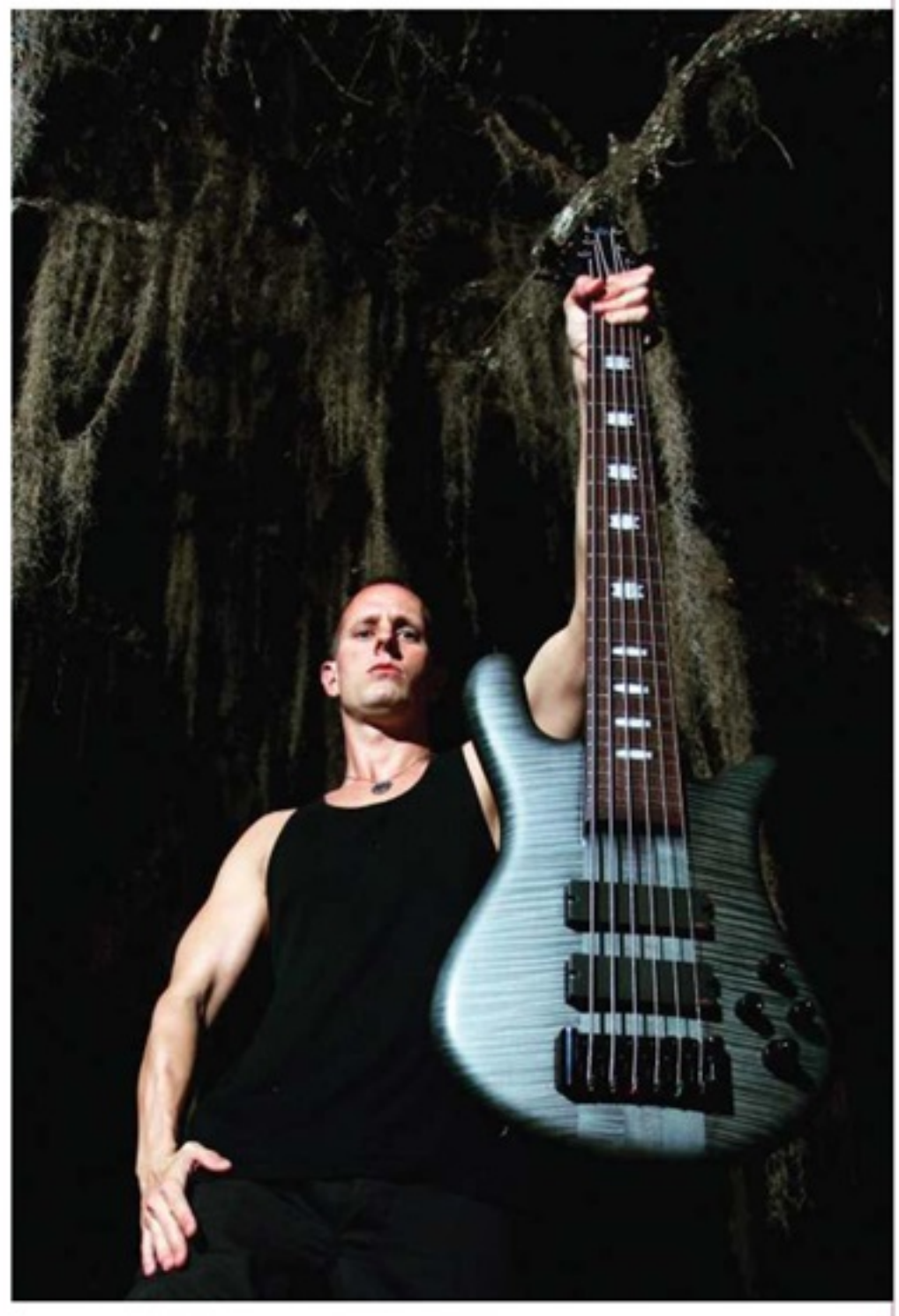
www.ruthgoller.com

THE METALHEAD

MIKE POGGIONE

Monstrosity bassist Mike continues his fingerlickin' pickin' series

Hello again! I hope everyone enjoyed last month's article, where we talked about different right-hand fingering in order to achieve increased speeds while maintaining proper technique at all times. Let's look at another one of my favourite string picking techniques. This one will increase your speed by using your ring finger and middle finger in the alternating pattern of ring,



index, middle and then index finger again. I've noticed a lot of players using this approach. I also want to mention the use of normal triplets consisting of the pattern of (R) M I, (R) M I and so on, which many players use as a standard technique to achieve speed – but do keep in mind the difference between triplets and the ability to create four notes by only using three fingers. I would suggest starting very slowly with all of these patterns: of course, use a metronome in order to build up precision, timing, accuracy and muscle memory. Start around 80bpm towards 100bpm, playing 16ths, then increase the speed of the metronome as you desire. I've always had a personal rule: if I'm going to sit down on the couch and watch TV or relax, my bass should be with me – and I should be practising right or left hand technique! It's also very important to work on each finger individually. Start by isolating one picking finger at a time and methodically pick through each string. I like to pick a string 50 to 100 times in a row to build up the strength and capability of each finger. This will improve muscle memory, co-ordination, endurance, and attack.

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THE ALTERNATIVE ROCKER

MICHAEL MCKEEGAN

The power-trio problem solved by Therapy? bassist Mike

As the bassist in a power trio, I'm on a continual quest to try and make my sound and playing fill the gap that exists between the guitar and the drums. On record, we tend to use double-tracked (or more!) guitars most of the time, so from my point of view there's always a concern live that we might sound empty or thin, especially during lead or guitar solo sections. Over the years I've taken various approaches to filling that bit of the sonic spectrum. Originally I used to kick in a distortion pedal in those sections which I felt needed a lift, but once we started to play bigger venues and make more sophisticated records, that soon began to sound weak: it also tended to suck up a lot of the bottom end. As a result I went for a more extreme main sound, with quite a lot of gain, which sounded amazing when played on its own – but was too mushy within the context of the other instruments. I also ended up having to crank my amp to a stupid volume to get any kind of presence, a move which never makes you popular with bandmates or sound engineers. At one stage I tried an even more convoluted setup, with a channel fed through a guitar distortion and a pitchshifter into a small guitar combo. With a fifth note added via the pitchshifter, I achieved a pleasing guitar power-chord effect which tracked along with the root notes of my bass-lines. Another time I added a sub-octave effect which did thicken up the sound somewhat but became a bit of a nightmare live, as it made the mix very cluttered because the lower frequencies clashed with the kick and the floor toms. These were all very hit-and-miss affairs, so my current approach is simply to focus on the main bass tone. I want it to occupy a bigger sonic real estate between the drums and guitar, while making sure the bass-lines move around in a complementary manner to the guitar and root notes. It's a bit like a diversion tactic to give the illusion of more instrumentation. I suppose no-one ever heard Van Halen, Rush or early Sabbath for the first time and said "This is great – but what it really needs is some rhythm guitar"!

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THE EXTENDED-RANGE SPECIALIST

STEWART MCKINSEY

Do not think. Feel — says ERB ninja McKinsey

I mentioned a while ago that I'd suffered an injury and couldn't play for a while in the context of getting back to certain basics. I also recently brought up practice without an amp, and explained how this is a skill worth cultivating. This month, and next, I'm revisiting both of those things in true taskmaster form. I do more than half of my practice without an amp. We become accustomed to the way our gear colours our sound and how it in turns colours the way we play. Removing all things electronic from the equation will open up new things in our playing and also draw attention to habits that have grown out of playing with an amp, both of which are good because awareness of what it is we do is crucial to improving. This month I'd like you to focus on the quality and fullness of your notes, as well as on your consistency in executing them. By noting more than the instrument and the hands that play it, you will start to pay attention more to the vibration of the strings and the bass. 'Hearing' what you're doing in this way and having your body become an extension of your ears will make you more sensitive when plugged in again – but it will also give you a way to recognise what's going on during performance when you will not be able to hear the bass. The best way to do this is to start playing something you know well when it's amplified and get used to it on each part of your neck, not only where you're accustomed to playing it. This gives your hands a chance to identify the response of the strings and the instrument that you want for the piece. As you do this more, and adapt to acoustic practice, you will hear your notes become more consistent as the technique in both hands almost instinctively develops to get what you need from them. You will also start to become aware of your dynamic range and your ability to use it. Remember, because you won't really be able to hear the lowest notes, you must start to feel them. Your goal with the highest notes is not simply to have the string sound, but to focus on the quality of each note and make sure it has as much detail as you can give it.

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WITHOUT A GUITAR
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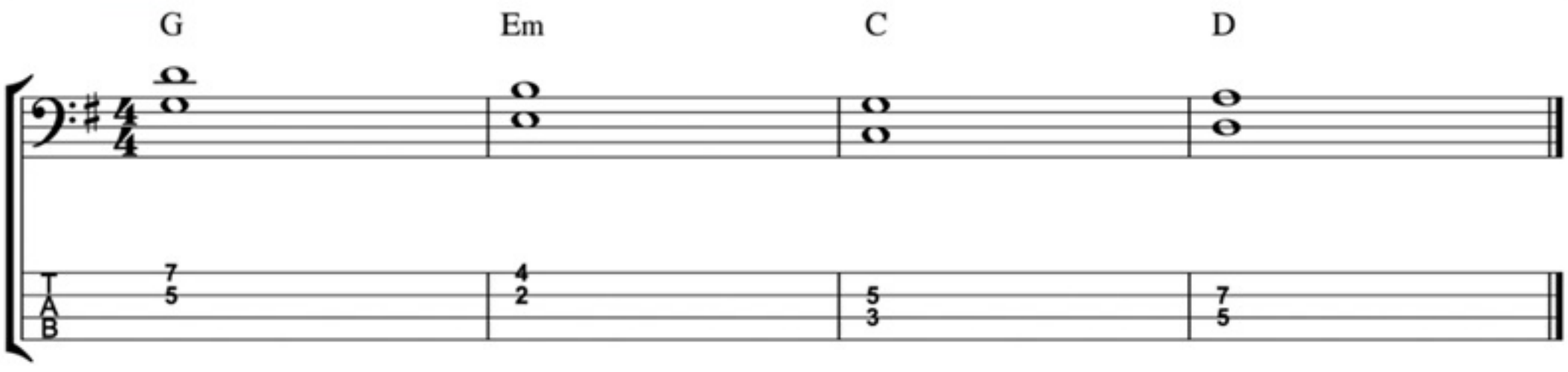
Beginners' Tutorial

Starting out on bass? You're in good hands with the great Steve Lawson. Let the journey begin!

Greetings! I hope you've had a productive month, experimenting with walking bass-lines to connect chords. This month we're going to take a slight sideways step and look at something that doesn't often get introduced this early on in a beginning bass course – but arguably should – and that's playing more than one note at once. Whether we think of this as playing chords, or we think about double stops simply as pairs of notes that work together, more and more kinds of music are creating space for the beautiful sound of bass chords, and with so many bass players having tried guitar before they arrive at this hallowed shore, it makes sense to try and put some of those wasted thin-string days to good use, eh?

Let's go back to the chord sequence we've been working on – G, Em, C, D. Our first step with the bass-line was to note that the fifth on both major and minor chords is the same. So let's start there with our bass chords:

EXAMPLE 1

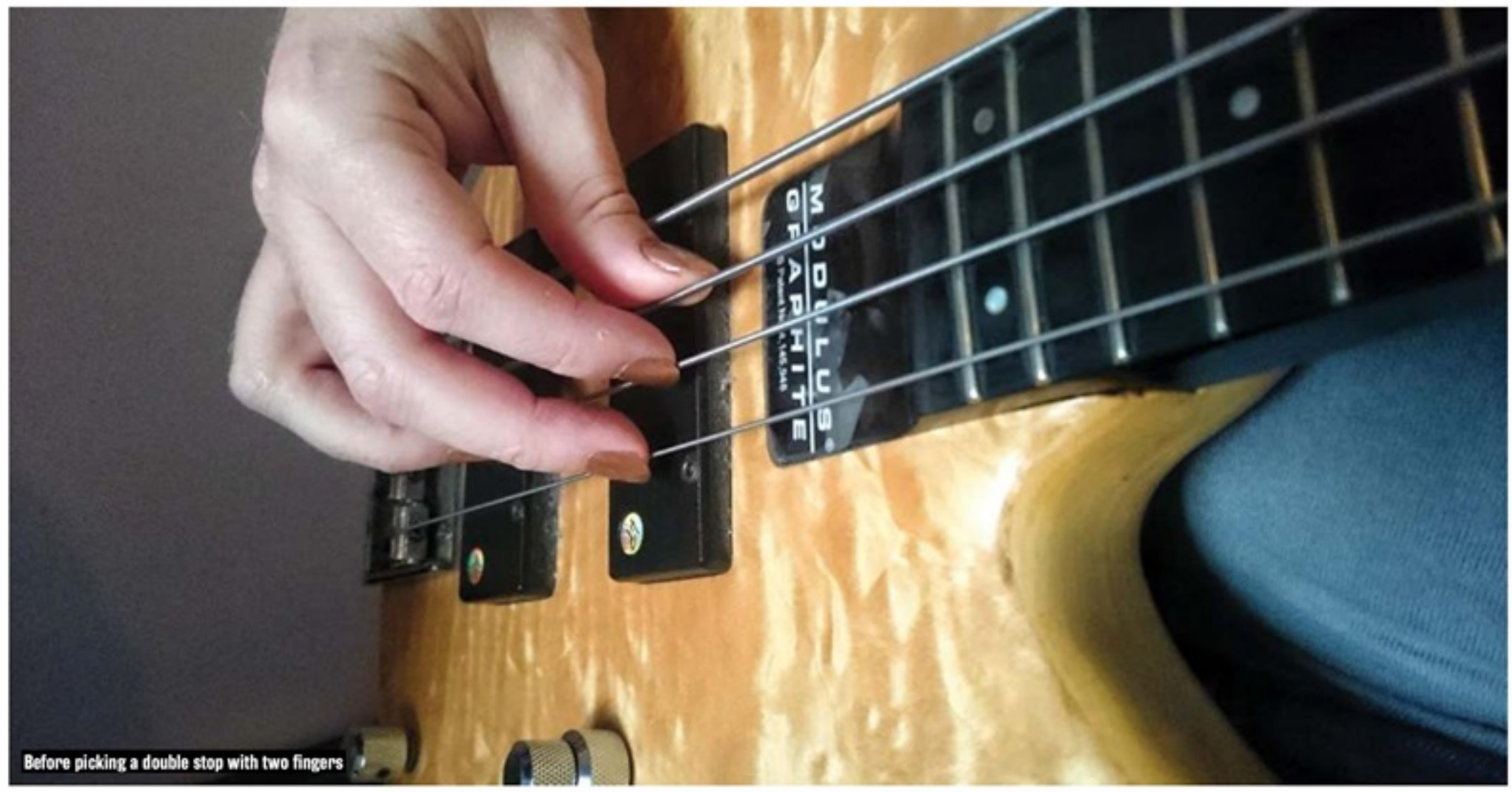


Now, a couple of things are important to notice here. Firstly, although there's no third in any of the chords we've played that would tell us whether or not the chord is major or minor, I've still included that in the chord symbols above the music. The chord symbols are not just about describing what you're doing, they're an invitation to anyone you're playing with to play notes that relate to the whole chord. Likewise, when we see a chord symbol that has other notes added – for example G7 or Bm7b5 – we don't have to play all those notes. They are there to show us what's in the chord. In most settings, the chord will also help us know what the rest of the notes are in the key for us to use if we're creating a walking bass-line, as we were last month. But we do as much or as little with that info as we like.

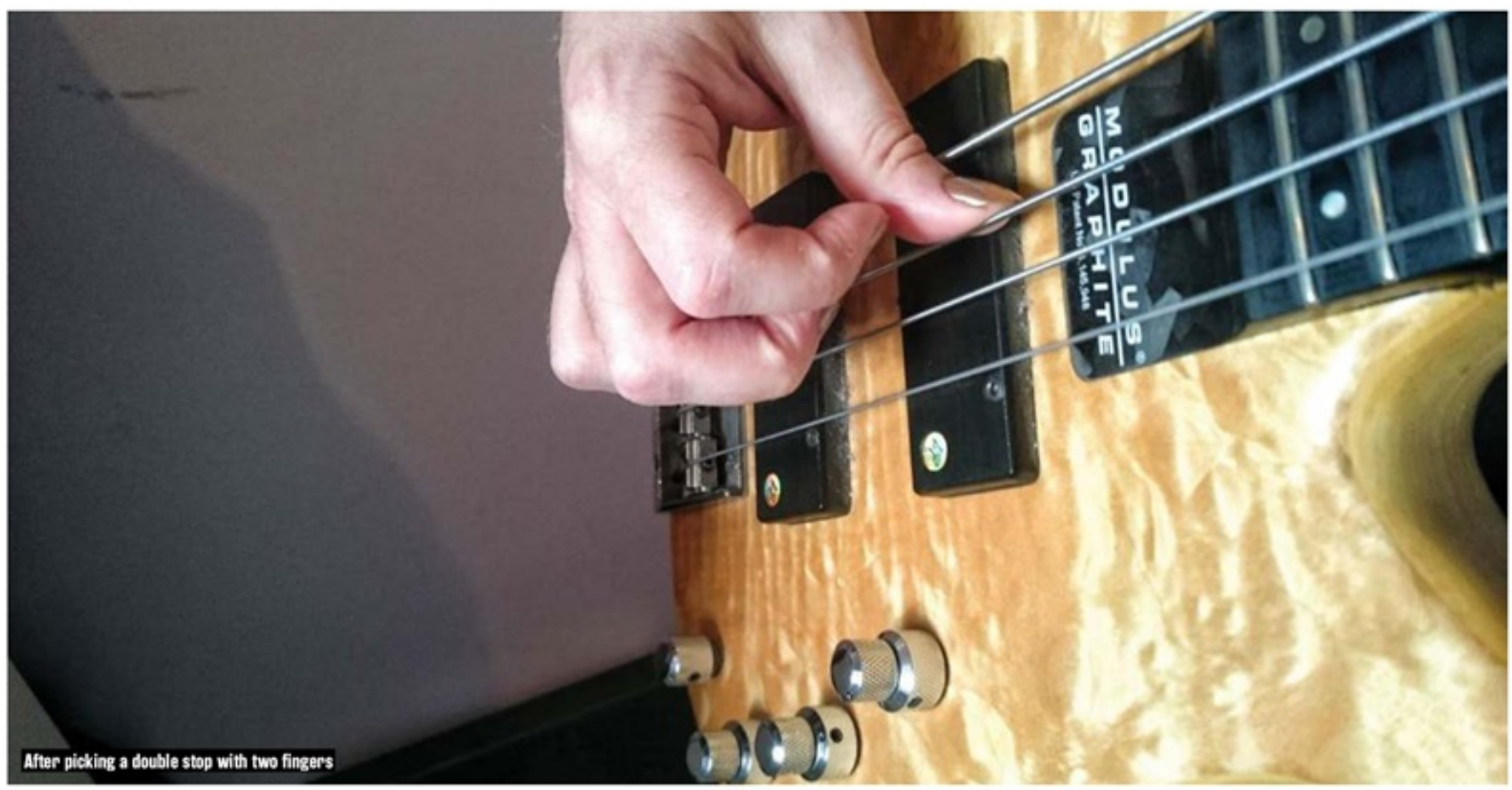
Our first issue, when we start wanting to play more than one note at a time, is how we're going to make a sound. After all, the rest stroke that we've been using up until now to pluck the strings would stop the lower of the two strings from sounding, so we need some other options. Let's consider three of them.

Our first one is to use our first and second fingers to pluck the strings simultaneously. This time we need to pluck away from the body of the bass so we don't accidentally mute one of the two strings we're playing. One of the added benefits of picking like this, compared to the rest stroke, is that it generally has a little less low end, which brings some focus to the chordal sound.

> "USE YOUR FIRST AND SECOND FINGERS TO PLUCK THE STRINGS SIMULTANEOUSLY. THIS TIME WE NEED TO PLUCK AWAY FROM THE BODY OF THE BASS SO WE DON'T ACCIDENTALLY MUTE ONE OF THE TWO STRINGS WE'RE PLAYING"



Before picking a double stop with two fingers



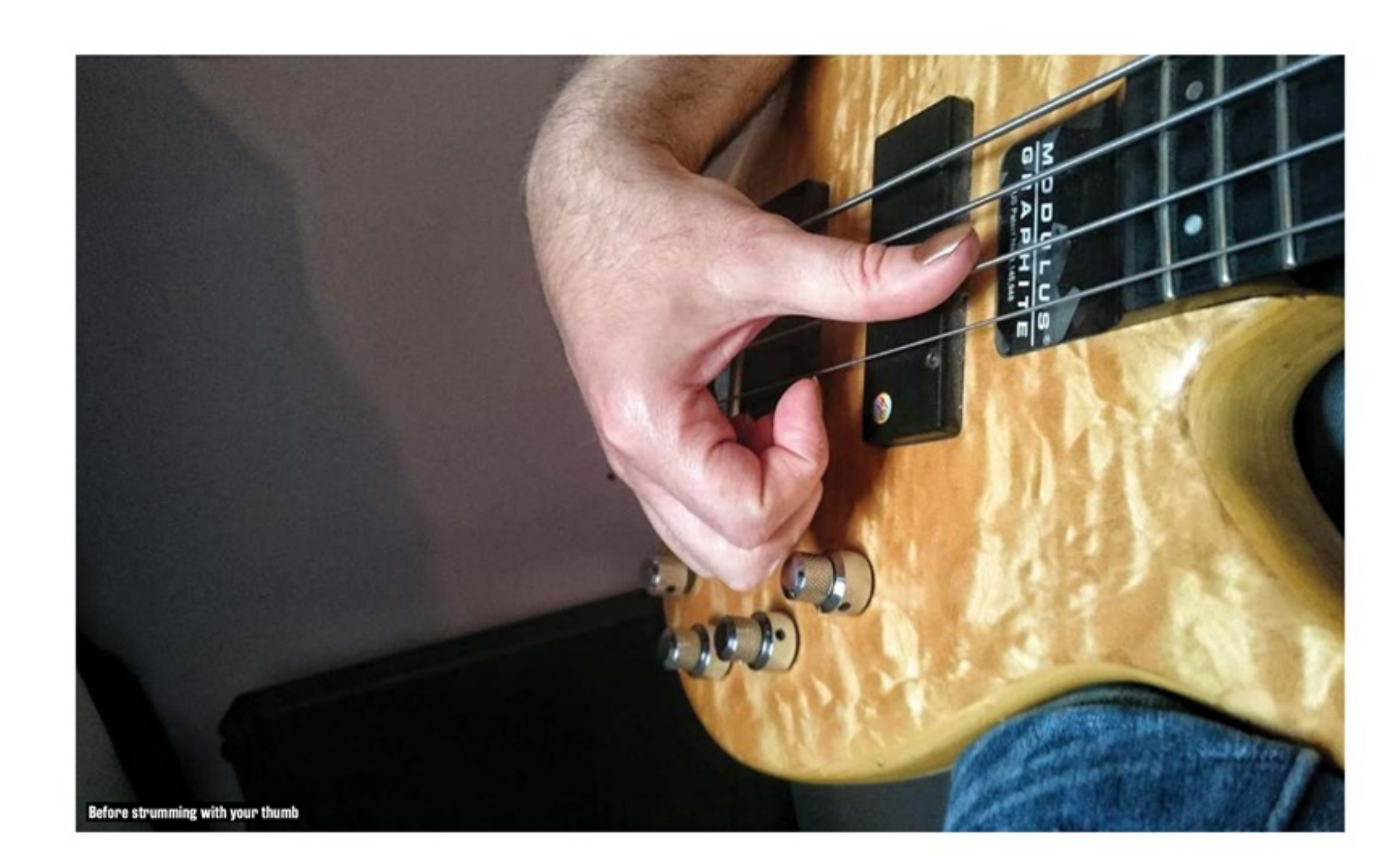
After picking a double stop with two fingers

One of the trickiest bits to get used to is shifting your fretting hand from one chord to the next. Take it slow, and in working out how best to do it, focus on economy of motion. You don't want to have to bring your whole hand away from the bass, but you probably don't want a big scraping sound as all your fingers drag over the strings from one chord to the next. Where you've got two chords on the same strings (in this example, the G and Em are on the same strings, and the D and C are too) it's possible to slide them down.

Again, this will take some practice. Repetition is your friend. If you particularly like the sliding sound, it's possible to play all four chords here just on the middle two strings. Take some time to work out where the G major and E minor chords would be if you played them on the A and D strings.

Our second way to strike the strings is to strum them with the side of the thumb. Experiment with harder and softer play, and vary the position between the end of the neck and the bridge to see where the sweet spot is for the kind of sound you want to get. Your strum should pass across the strings fairly quickly, but try not to dig in so hard that your thumb gets caught on the lower one!

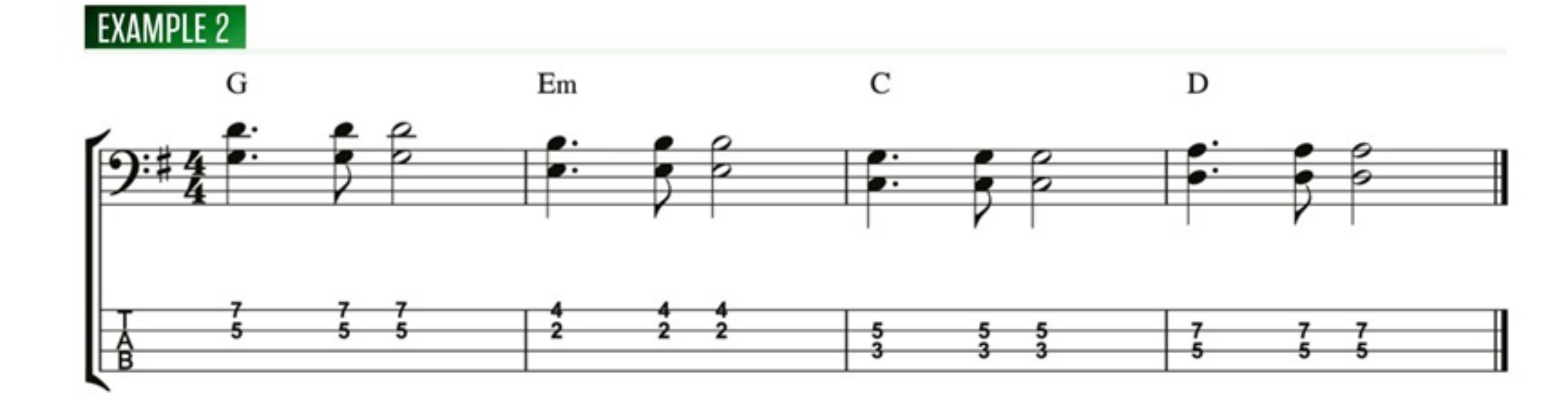
This strumming motion can be done a couple of other ways too. We can use a pick, held between the thumb and index fingers, or it's possible to strum using the nail on your index finger, holding your hand in the same position as for using a pick, without the pick being there! Lastly, there's the Stanley Clarke strum, borrowed from flamenco guitar, where we strum with all the fingers of the picking hand, in a motion that starts as a loose fist and then opens out flat, striking strings in the process. Search Youtube for Stanley playing 'School Days' for a look at this technique. It's a really tricky one, but there's no harm in experimenting at any stage of your playing!



Before strumming with your thumb

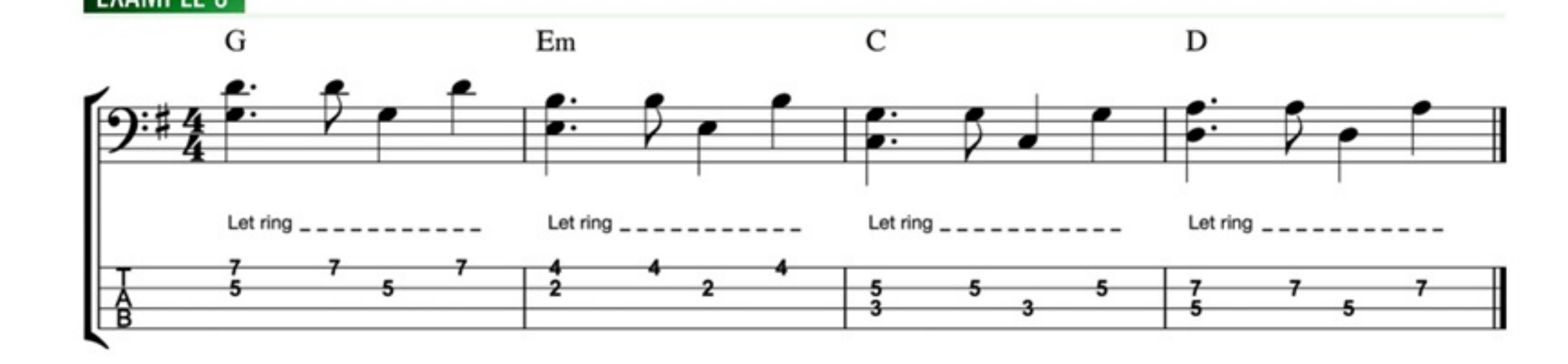
So far we've just played the chord on beat one of each bar. That's great practice, and a nice open sound, but we may want to be a little more rhythmic, so let's try another rhythm:

EXAMPLE 2



The tricky thing here is co-ordinating the fingers on your picking hand to strike the strings at the same time. It can be a little harder than it sounds, so go easy on yourself. If you're using one of the strumming techniques, the trickiest bit is getting your strumming hand back in position for the third strum. It comes quite soon after the second one, so requires some forward planning. There's no musical reason why we shouldn't be able to mix up playing chords and single notes. In fact, doing just that can add rhythmic and textural interest without having to add in a load more notes. So still just using the roots and fifths, we can try our chord progression like this:

EXAMPLE 3



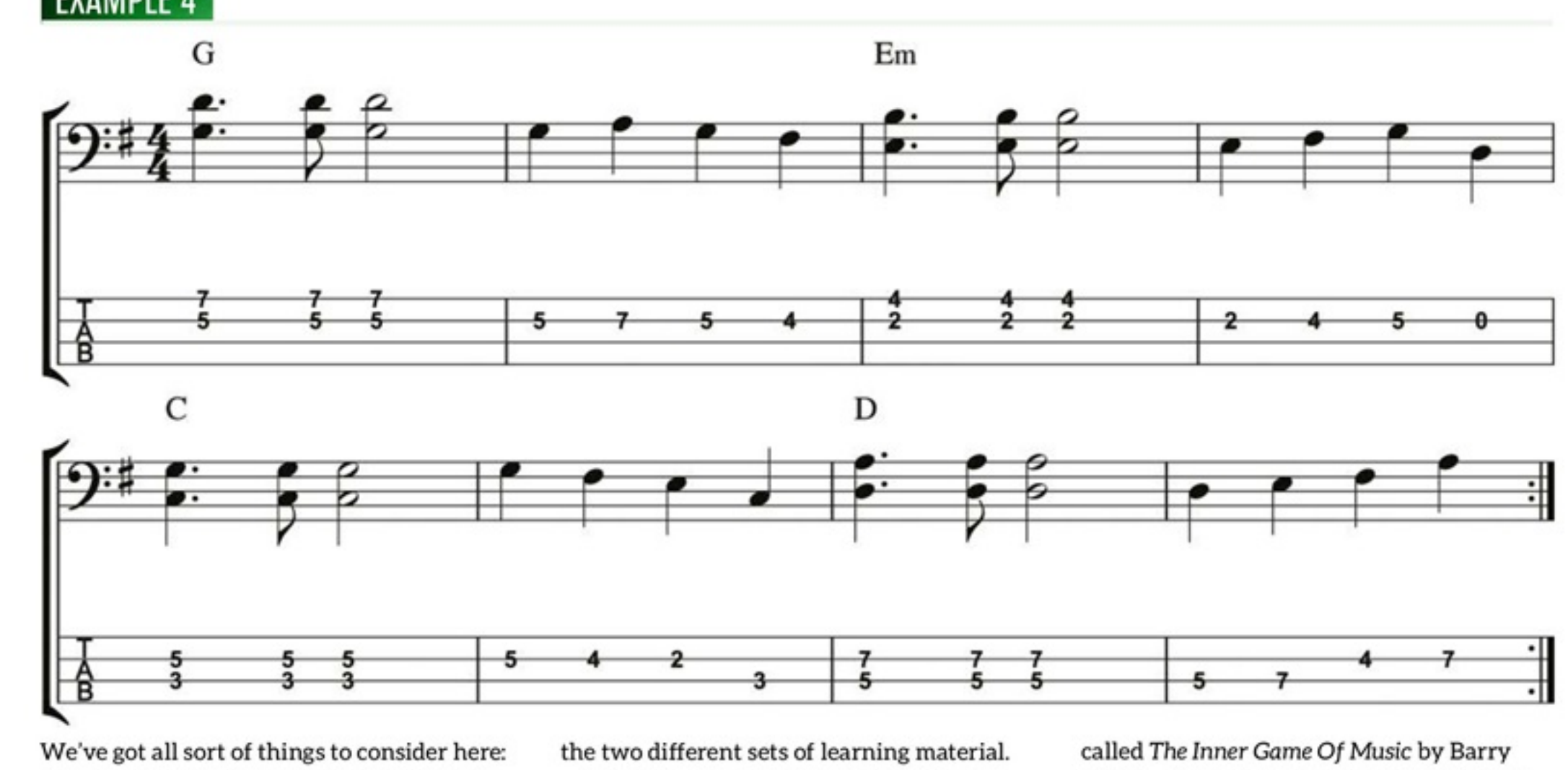
After strumming with your thumb

Here, the trick is allowing each of the notes to ring as long as possible. Again, we're picking away from the bass, rather than using rest strokes, so our picking hand doesn't end up muting notes that are supposed to be sustained.

Experiment with picking in different positions between the bridge and the neck: even shifting your hand down over the fingerboard can give a really nice mellow sound. If you have long fingernails, you may want to try using them to pick with. Cut or file them to a consistent length beforehand to make it easy on yourself.

Let's finish this month by combining these two-note chords with a walking bass-line. For this, we're going to halve the harmonic rhythm of the piece (the harmonic rhythm is the speed at which the chords change). So we're now going to have two bars for each chord instead of one. We'll play the double stop in the first bar, and play four notes from the key of G to walk between the chords in the second bar of each chord. Like this:

EXAMPLE 4



We've got all sort of things to consider here: how to switch between different picking or strumming styles with your picking hand; how to shift between different positions in the left hand; getting from two note chord shapes to walking patterns and back again... It's a lot to work on and a lot to remember. My advice is to jump in and see if you can short-circuit the part of your brain that turns everything into a list of commands and instead allow your intuition to combine the two different sets of learning material.

By now, you should have practised the walking lines from last month a fair bit, so they should be getting more comfortable. Take some time with the earlier exercises in this month's column, and when they feel comfortable, tackle this one. You can always come back and attempt it piece by piece if the jumping-in strategy falls flat, but you may well surprise yourself. On that theme, I'd highly recommend a book called *The Inner Game Of Music* by Barry Green – he talks a lot about those internal conversations and the ways that over-analysing things in the moment can kill our creativity and our potential to do seemingly complex things.

Above all, have fun with this. Once you've got this line down, try varying the walking part of the line, or incorporating some of the broken chord ideas from **Example 3** into the line as well. Until next month!

STUART CLAYTON

Intermediate Tutorial

Making progress, readers? Then dive in to Commander Clayton's amazing intermediate tutorial...

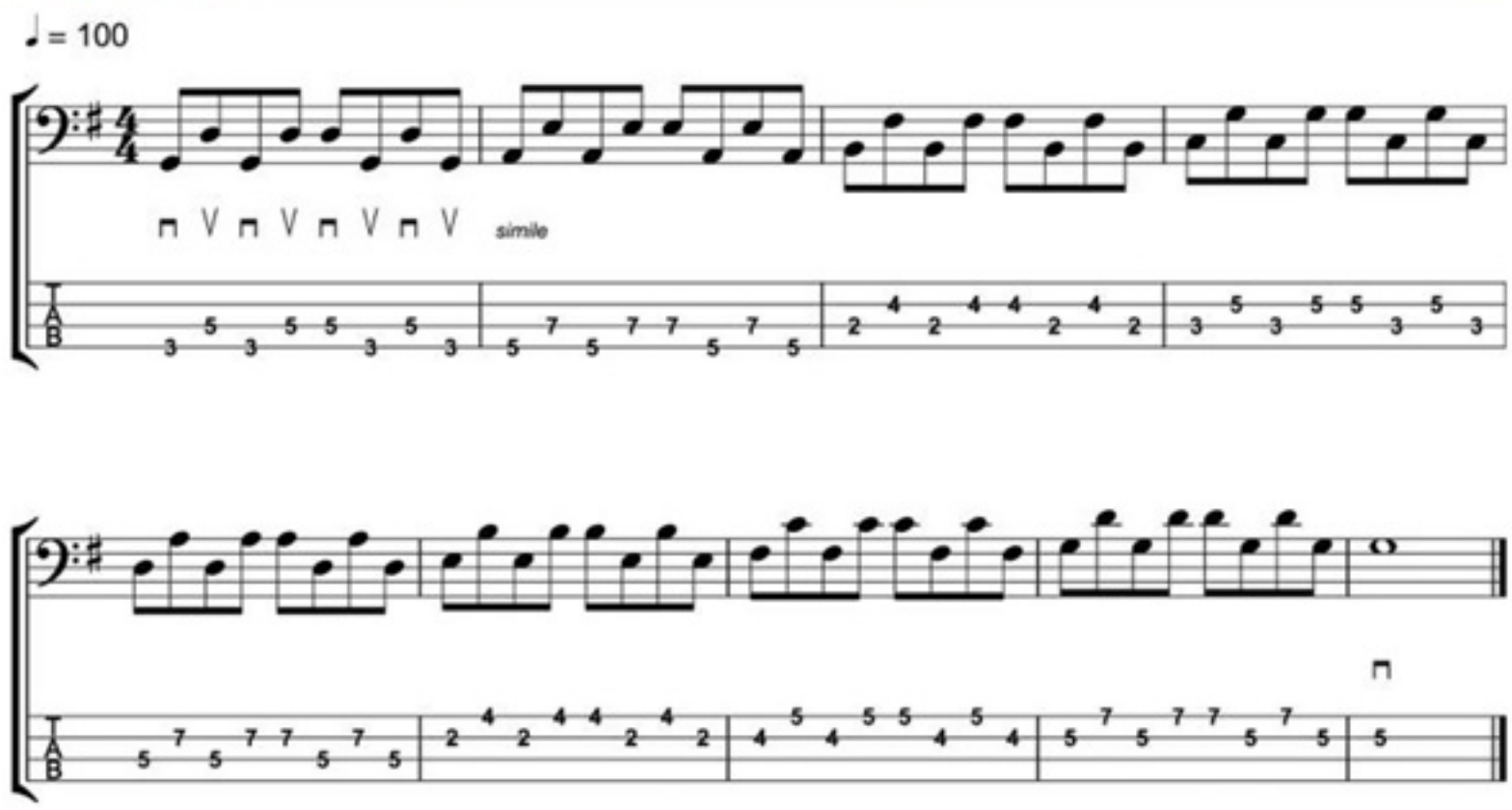
Welcome back to my new series of columns that are aimed at getting you up to speed with the plectrum. We're working through the technique from the very beginning, so if you've never used a plectrum before, this is a great place to start.

Last issue we looked at the basics of holding the plectrum and playing simple crotchet/quaver-based lines using the correct application of downstrokes and upstrokes. Hopefully you'll recall that all notes that fall on the beat should be played with downstrokes, while all notes that fall on the 'and' or upbeat should be played with upstrokes. Taking this approach at these early stages will ensure that you can eventually play anything with the plectrum that you would play with your fingers.

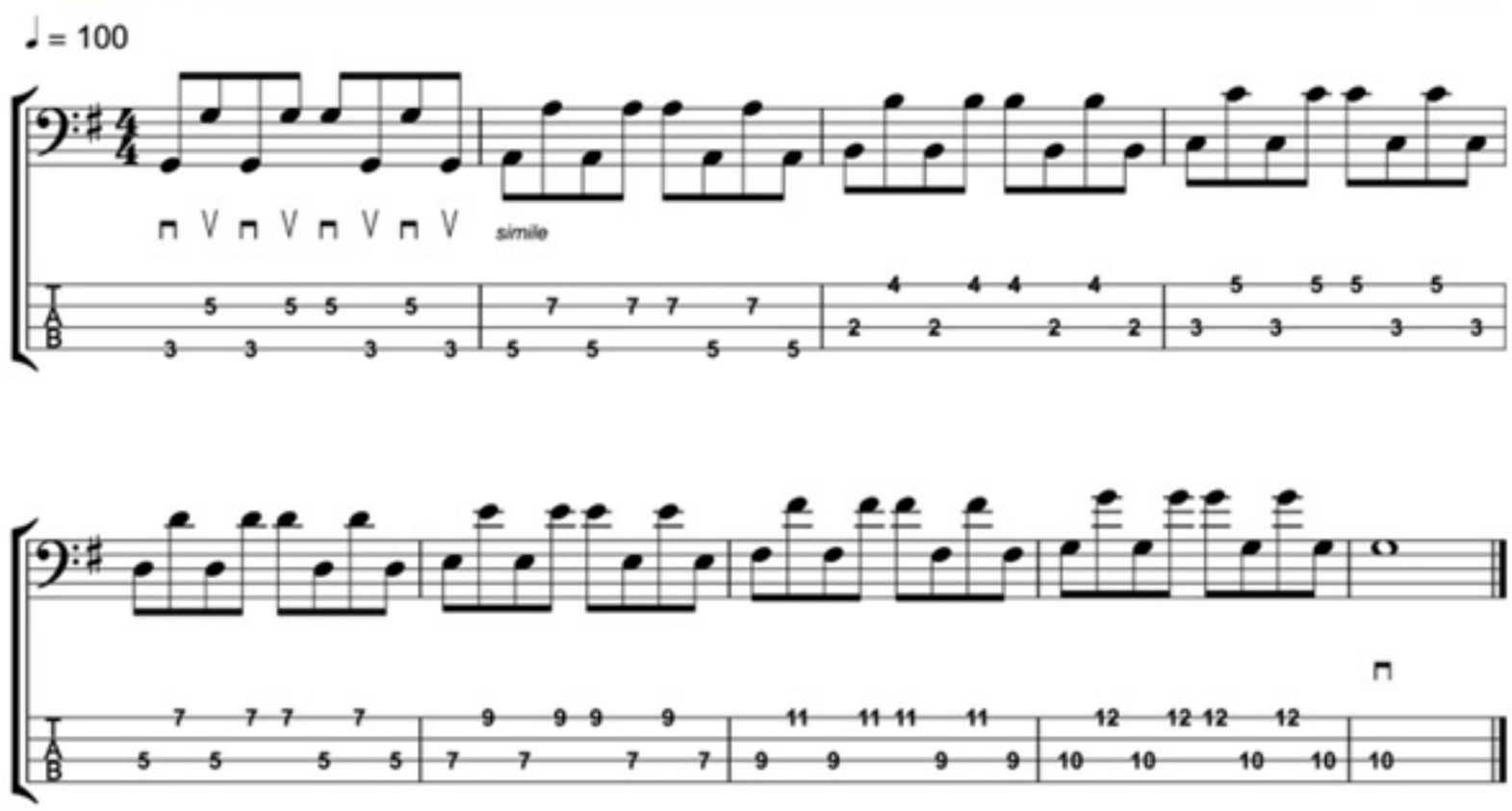
In this month's column we're going to continue to apply down- and upstrokes in this manner, but with the added complication of having to cross or skip strings. Before we go any further it's worth clarifying some of the terminology: string crossing refers to picking from one string to an adjacent string – the E string to the A string for example. String skipping refers to moving to a non-adjacent string, such as the E string to the D string – literally 'skipping' over the A string.

The first group of exercises that we'll look at here are based around the G major scale. To get maximum benefit from these exercises, be sure to transpose them to other keys as well.

EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



Example 1

In this exercise we'll be playing root-fifth intervals from each note of the G major scale. In the first half of the bar, the sequence will be root-fifth, with the roots on the E string and the fifths on the A string. This means that you'll play downstrokes on the E string, followed by upstrokes on the A string. In the second half of the bar, the sequence is reversed: fifth-root. This means that you'll play downstrokes on the A string and upstrokes on the E string. This might take you some time to get used to if you're new to using a plectrum, so it's worth spending some time on this first exercise.

Example 2

In this exercise we're going to widen the interval to root-octave. This means that we'll be string skipping from the E string to the D string in the first half of the bar, then from the D string to the E string in the second half. The downstroke-upstroke sequence will of course remain the same throughout.

Example 3

Let's take this concept to the next level. We'll now be skipping from the E string to the G string in the first half of the bar, and reversing the sequence in the second half. This is a tough exercise.

Playing Scales

Once you are comfortable with the previous three exercises, you can begin using the plectrum technique to play scales. This means that you can incorporate the technique into your scale practice, effectively killing two birds with one stone! Playing scales with a pick can be challenging as they are frequently played with three notes per string.

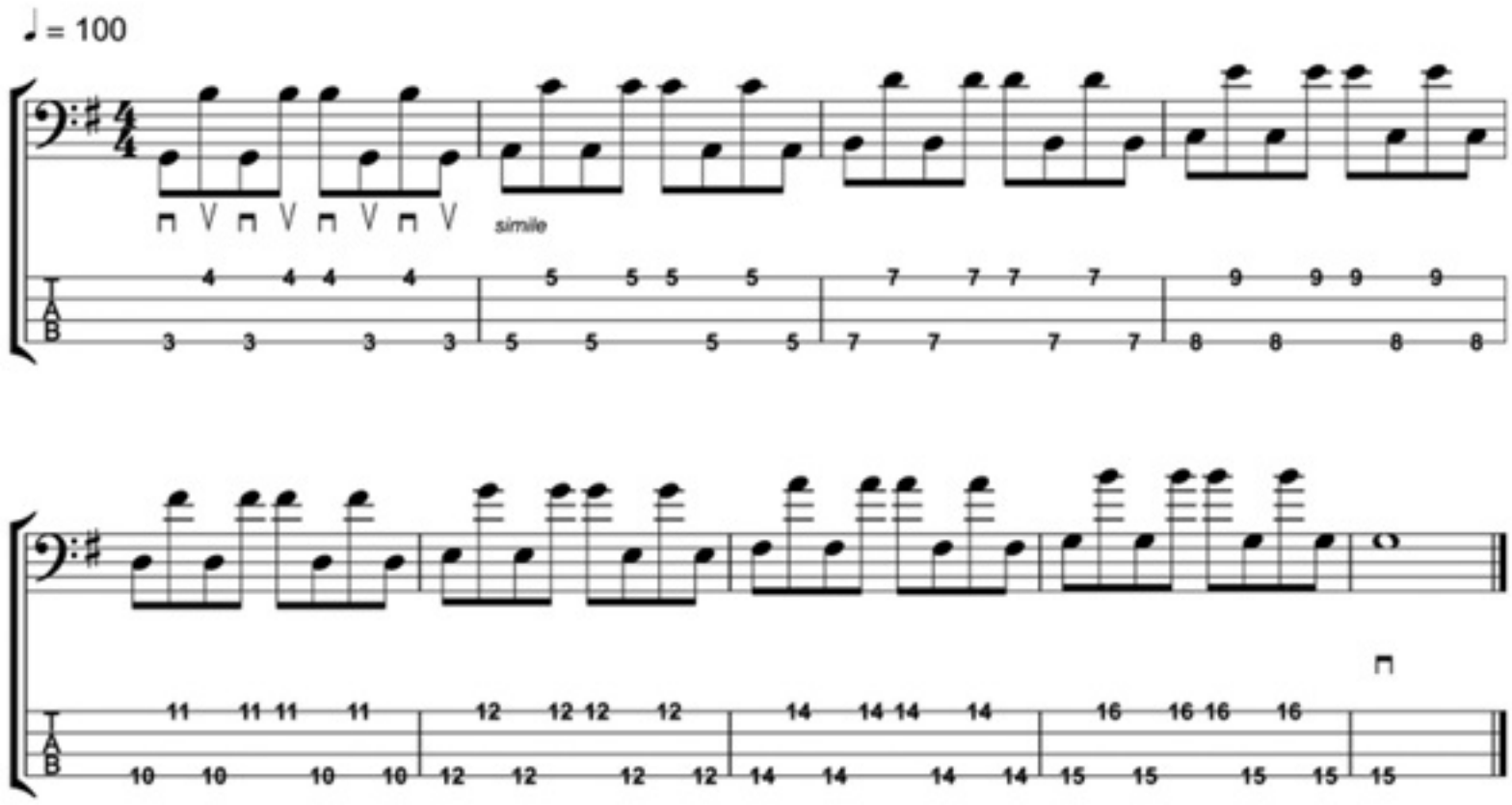
Example 4

This exercise is the basic pattern for playing a major scale. Practise this in C, then try playing through all 12 keys following the Circle of Fifths: C, G, D, A, E, B, F#, Db, Ab, Eb, Eb, Bb, F.

Example 5

You can of course expand on this to include two octave scales. Here's a two octave C major scale. Note that an alternative descending route has been used: good for fretboard/scale knowledge and picking practice!

EXAMPLE 3



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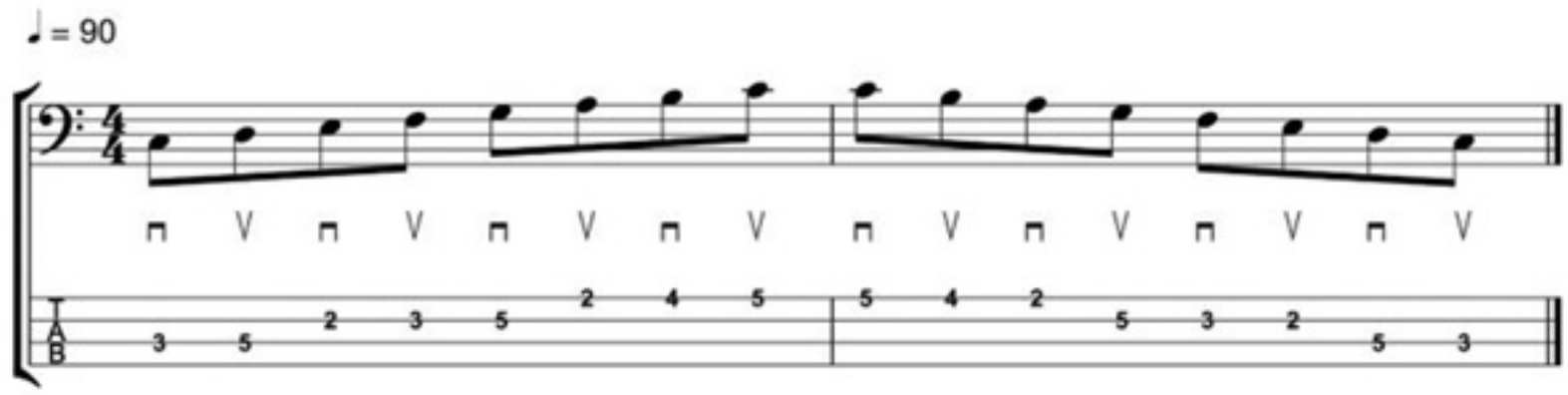

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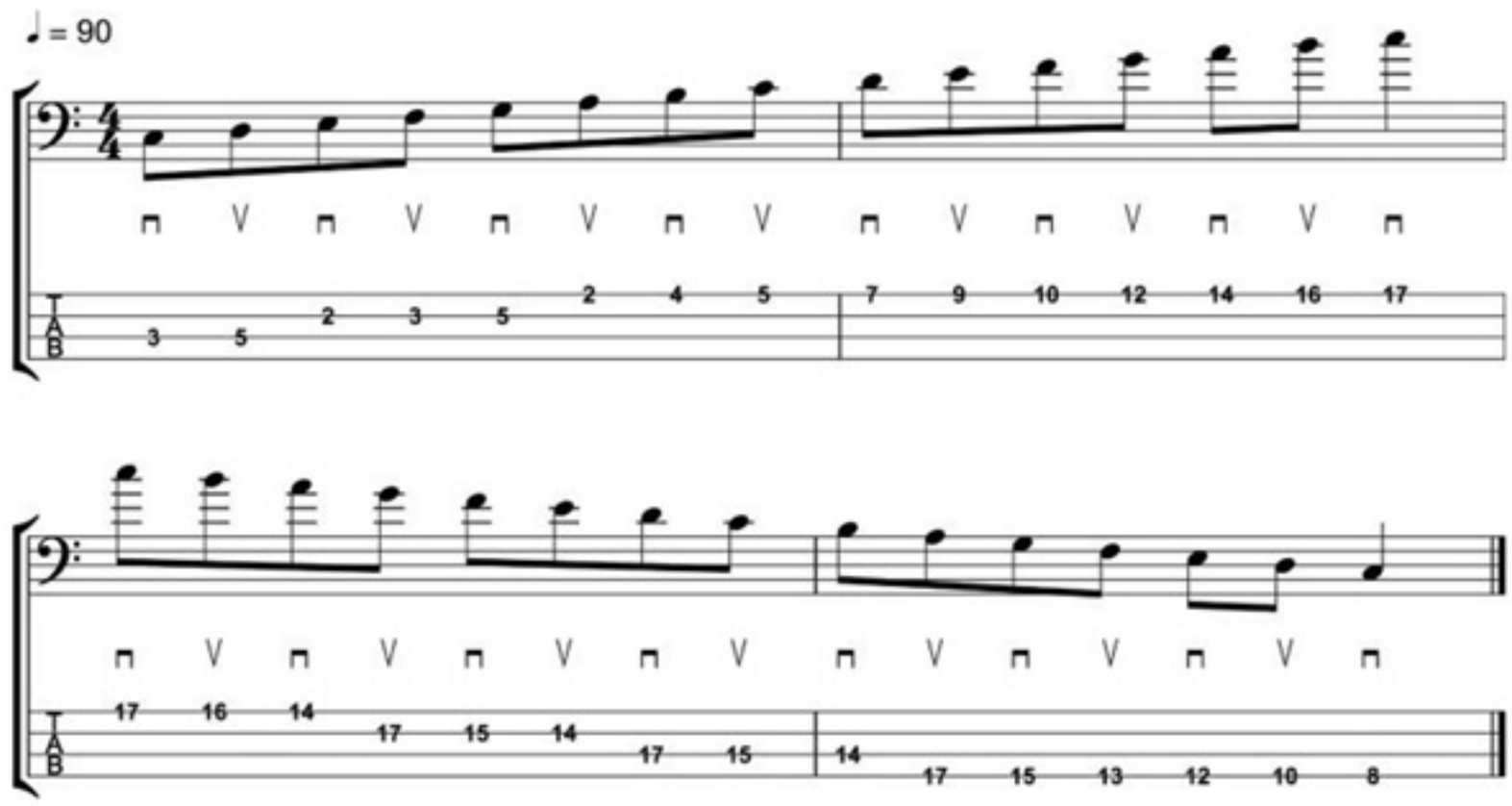


"IN THIS MONTH'S COLUMN WE'RE GOING TO CONTINUE TO APPLY DOWN- AND UPSTROKES IN THIS MANNER, BUT WITH THE ADDED COMPLICATION OF HAVING TO CROSS OR SKIP STRINGS"

Let's now put everything we've covered in this lesson to the test in some actual bass-lines.

Example 6

This exercise is a simple rock bass-line that features a descending A minor pentatonic phrase – perfect for working on string crossing.

Example 7

This bass-line is also based on the minor pentatonic scale and requires you to play across all four strings. Part of the arpeggio figure in bar seven requires you to skip back from a downstroke on the D string to an upstroke on the E string (on the third beat). This should not be a problem for you if you were able to successfully work through the first three exercises in this column.

Example 8

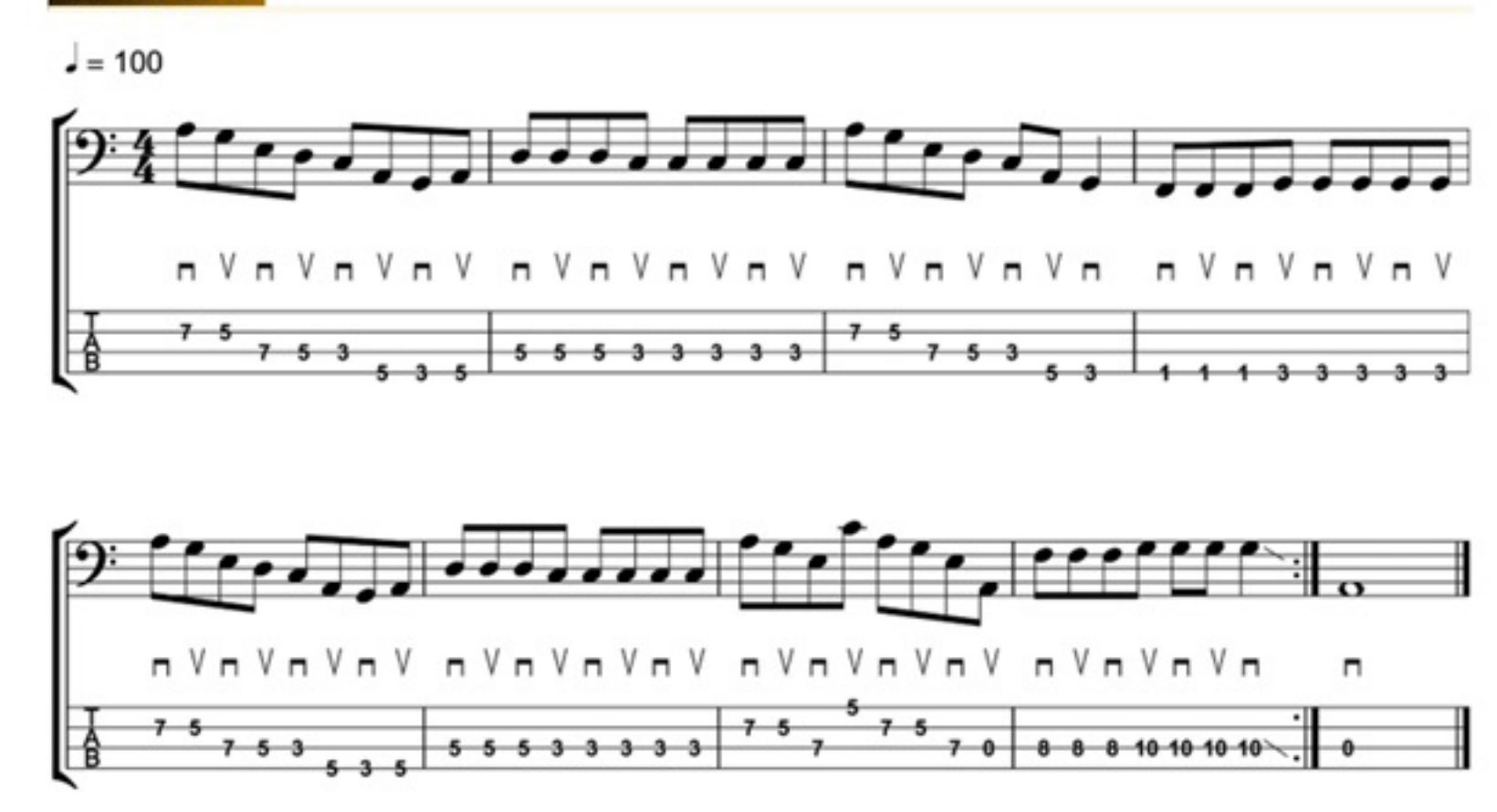
This exercise is a funk bass-line that is a little less busy.

Example 9

This is a fast punk bass-line that is based around octave phrases. There are some potential string crossing pitfalls in the fourth bar and also in the eighth bar where the bass arpeggiates C and D power chords.

"THIS BASS-LINE IS ALSO BASED ON THE MINOR PENTATONIC SCALE AND REQUIRES YOU TO PLAY ACROSS ALL FOUR STRINGS"

EXAMPLE 6



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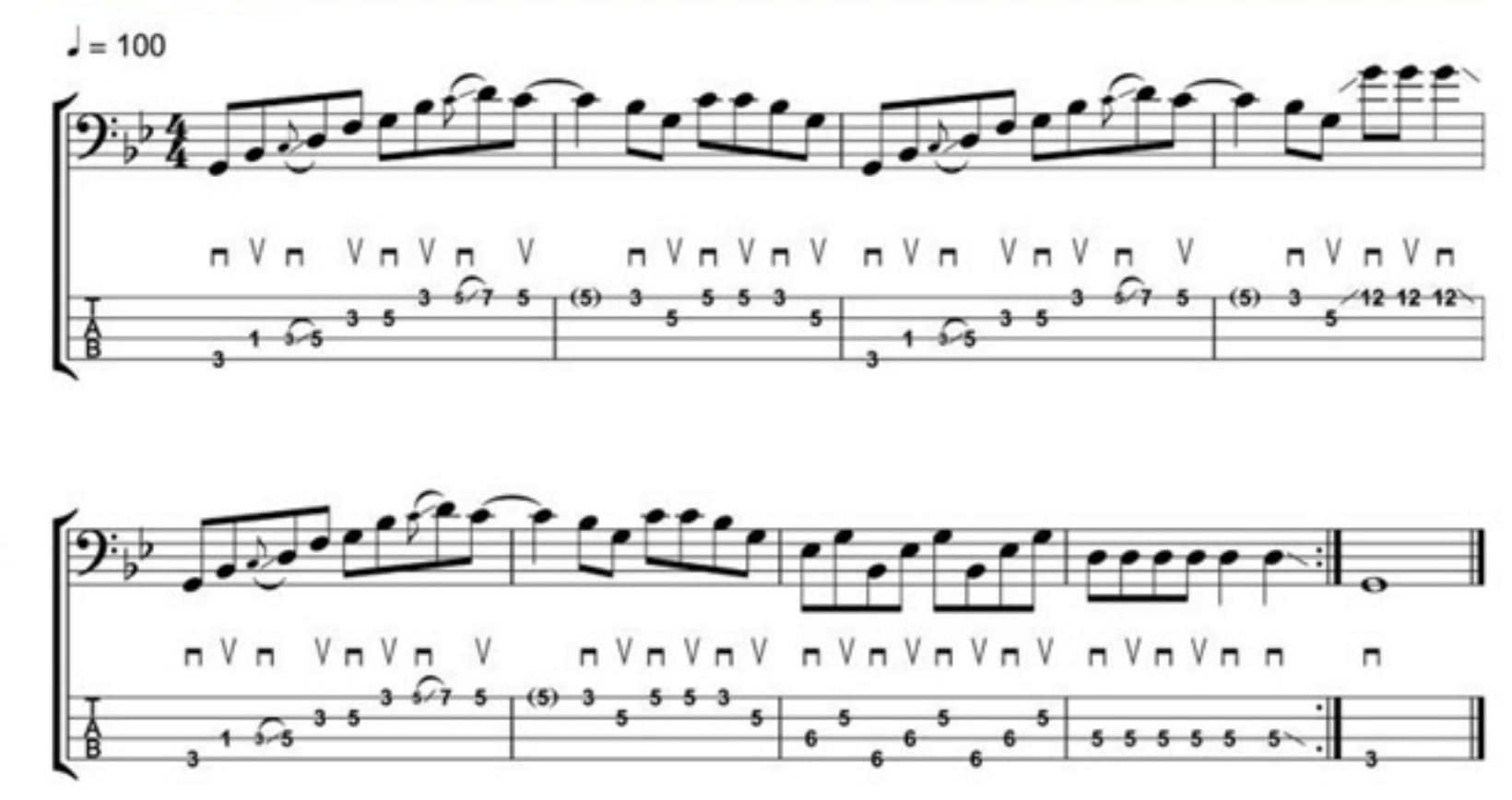

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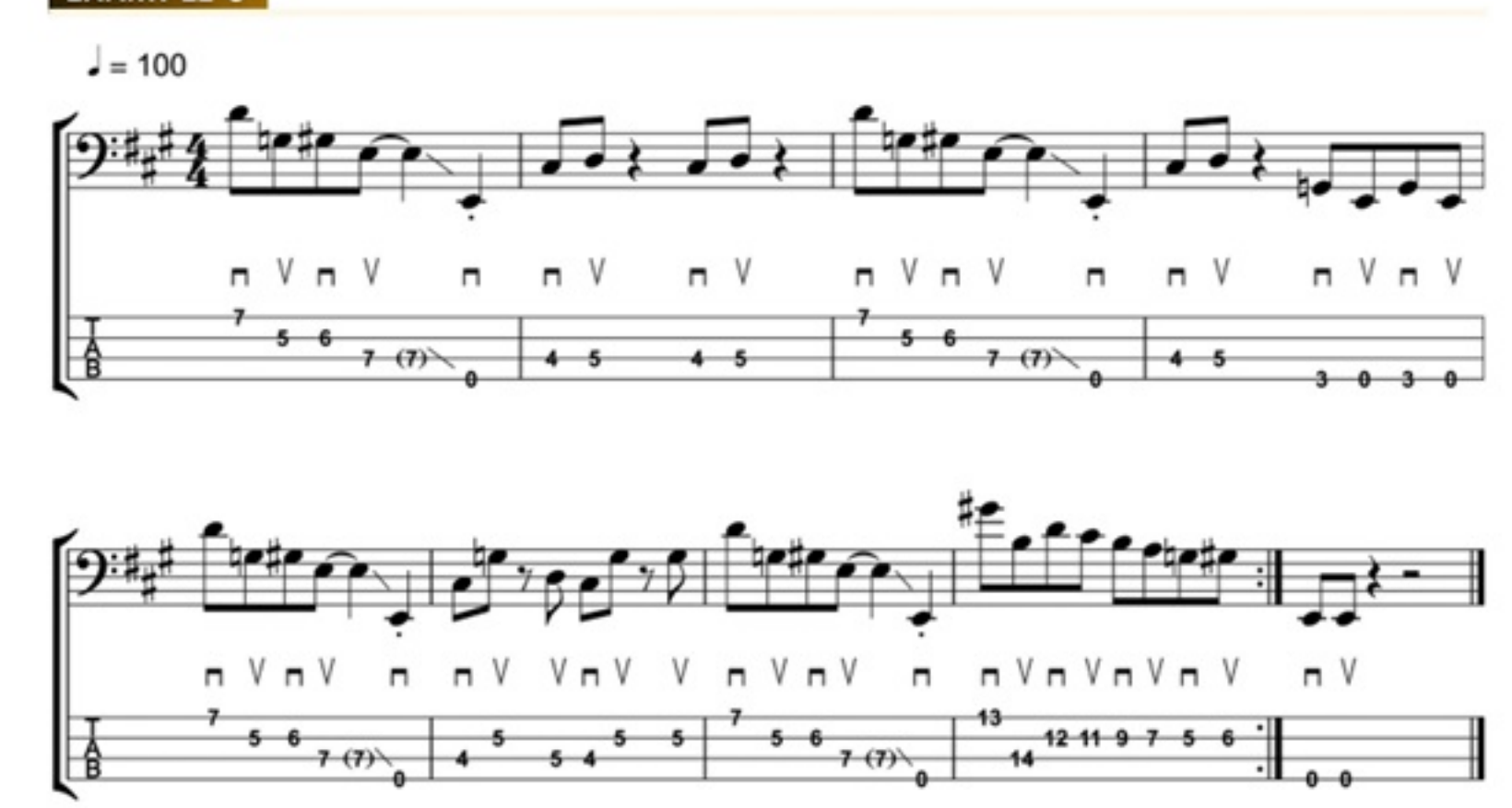


Example 10

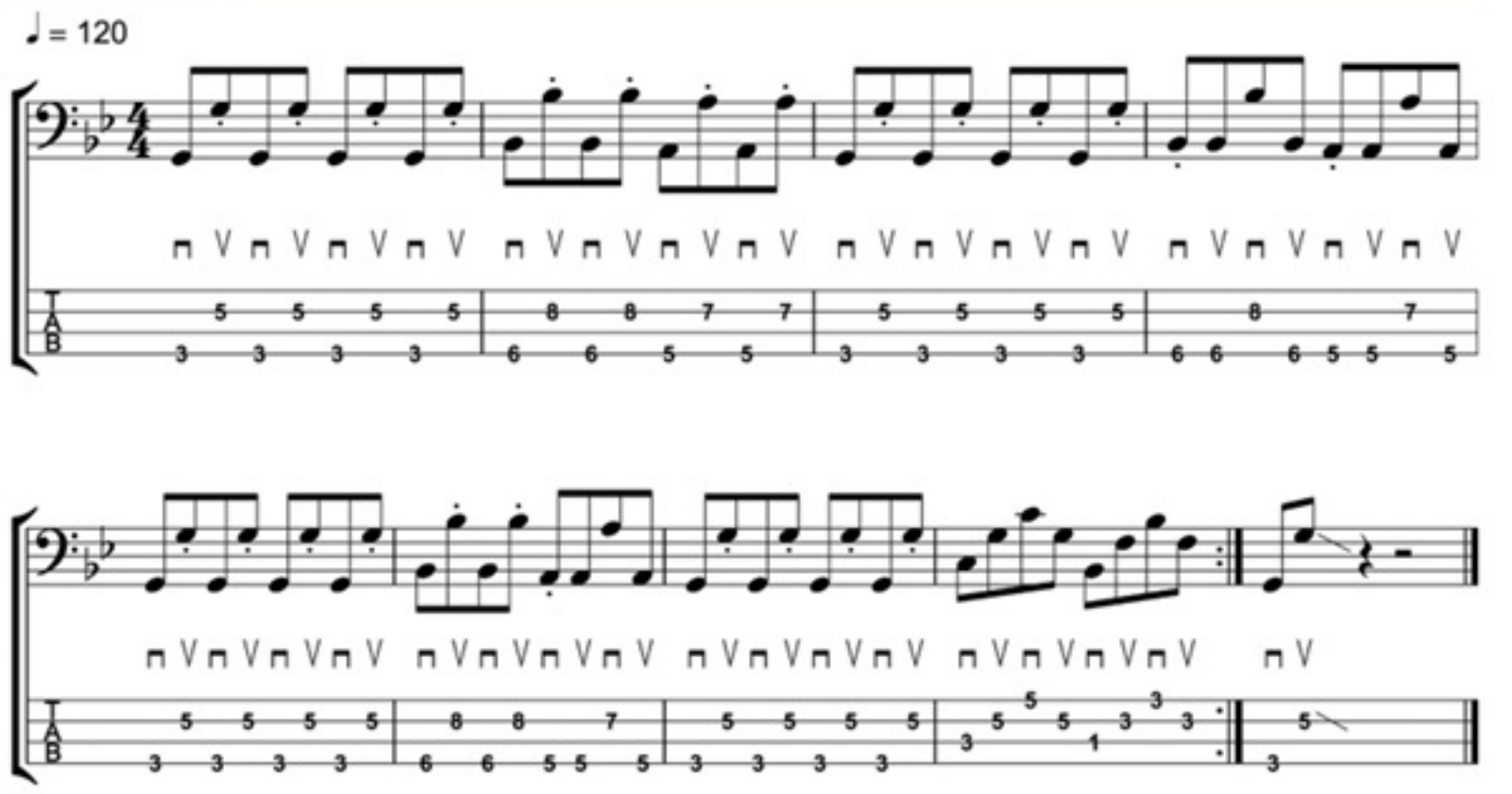
This is another funk bass-line. The second half of the line is slower and simpler, although in bars five, six and seven you are required to skip from the G string back to the E string, which is tough to do accurately. Take your time with this one.

That's it for this month. With the lines covered in this issue we've made some serious progress towards plectrum proficiency. Some of this material will be very challenging if you're new to the plectrum, so it's worth working through these lines slowly and methodically. I recommend playing in front of a mirror if you can – not only can you admire yourself (!), but it can be easier to keep an eye on your picking hand. The important thing to watch out for is that even when crossing or skipping strings, your hand continues the correct picking motion.

In addition to these exercises, playing through some simple rock songs that have consistent, quaver-based lines will be a real benefit. Tracks such as 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' (Nirvana), 'Warning' (Green Day), 'Living On A Prayer' (Bon Jovi) and 'Sex On Fire' (Kings Of Leon) are all good tunes to work on.

Next month we'll be continuing to look at alternate picking, focusing on lines that don't begin on the downbeat.

EXAMPLE 9



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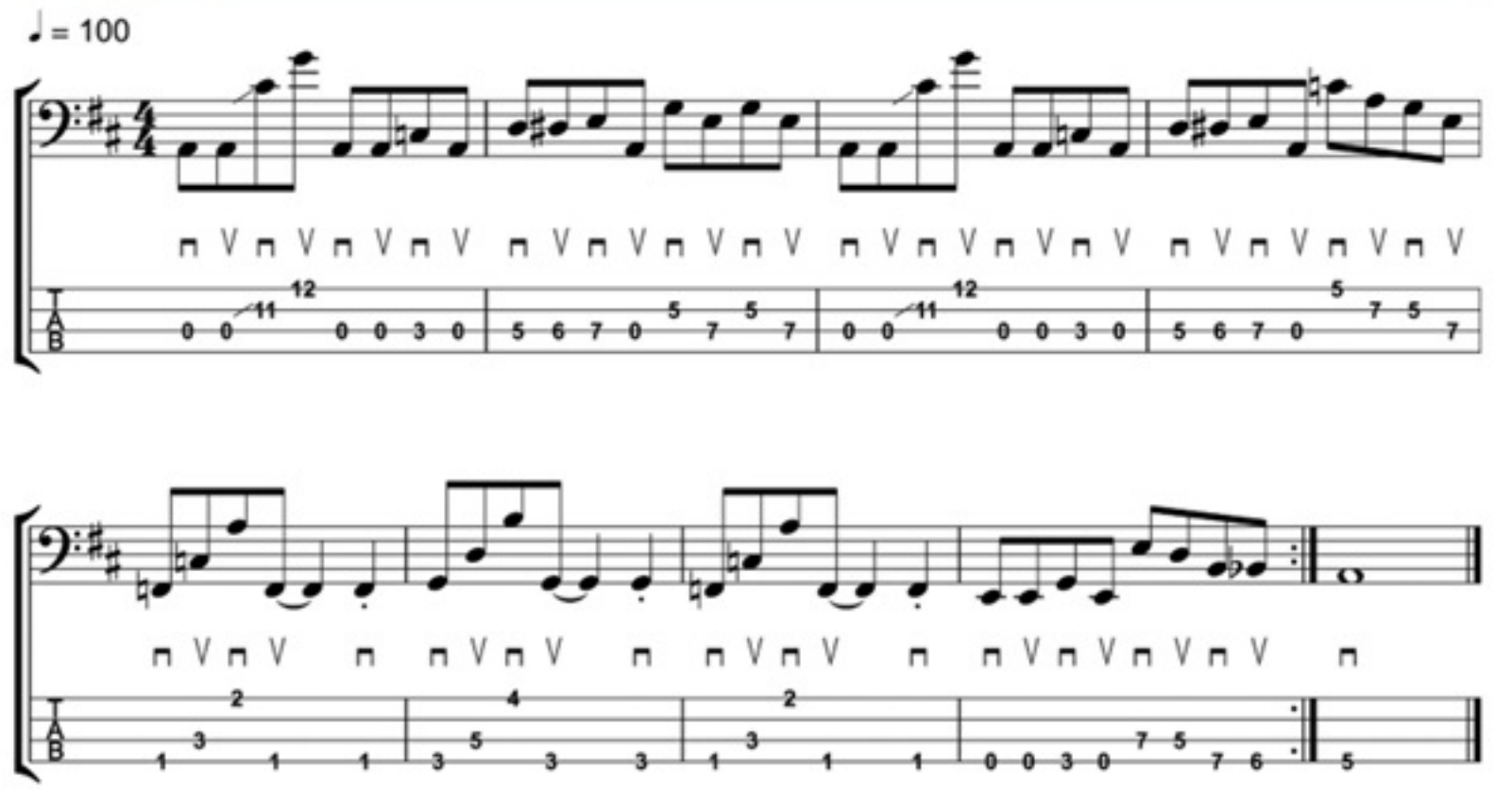

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PHIL MANN

Advanced Tutorial

Ready for the toughest bass workout since Chuck Norris picked up his first Fender? Sgt Mann is on hand!

Diversity in this line of work is a critical factor in the ability to maintain a sustainable career. My current employers are a good example of this. In recent weeks I've been asked to focus on root and fifth patterns while touring with the double Grammy-winning guitarist Albert Lee, but today I find myself catapulted to the complete opposite end of the spectrum, composing advanced double thumbing, double plucking, and left-handed slap-inspired bass-lines for you lovely folk to consume... all I can say is, thank goodness for espresso!

In previous instalments of our advanced techniques tutorial, our focus has mostly been on the development of left-hand technique in a slap idiom. Continuing the theme, this month's first exercise divides our hands into two somewhat unconventional roles.

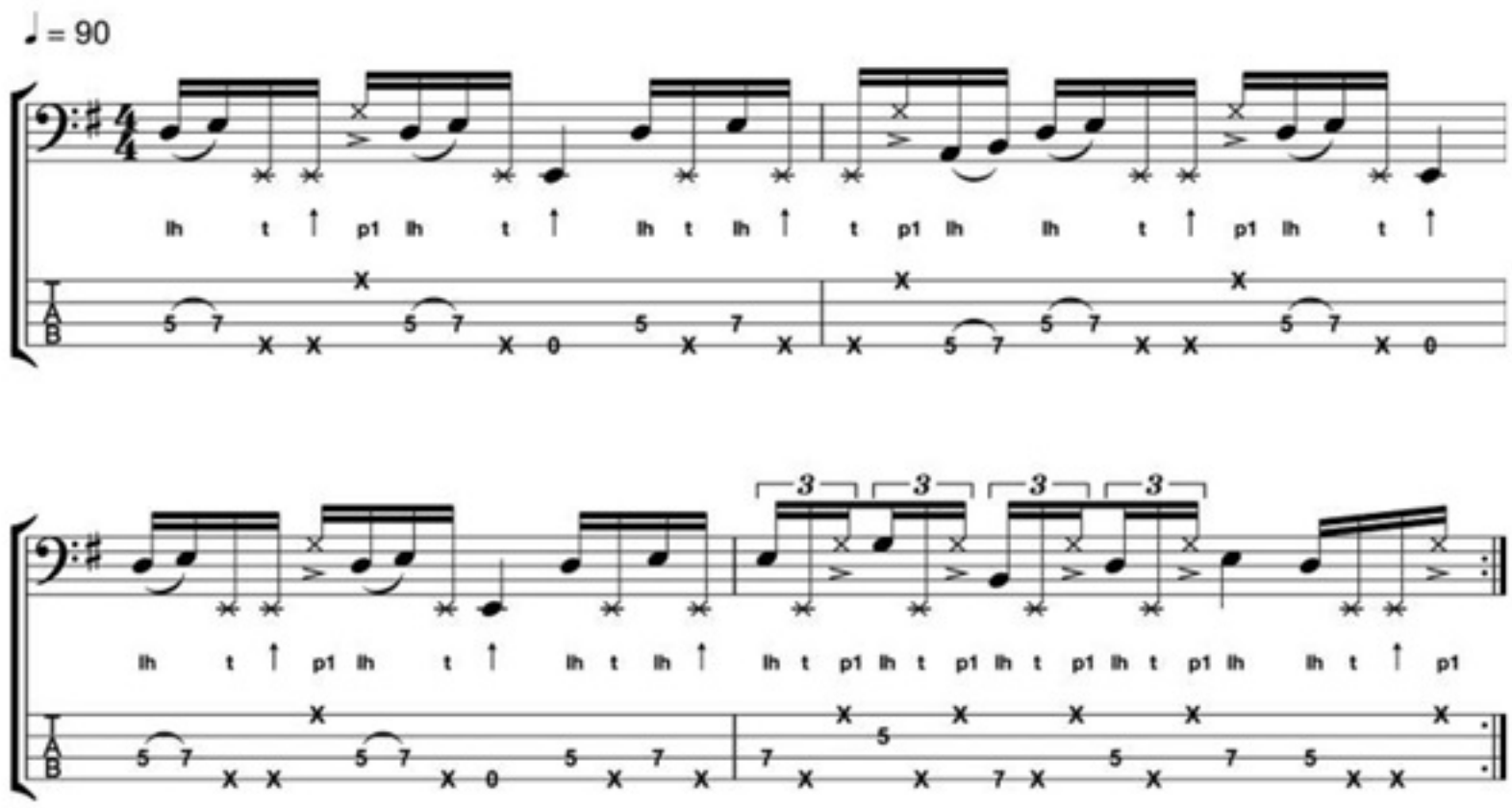
Example 1

Normally the note indicated by the fretting hand is struck with the other hand: however, in **Example 1** the fretting hand will hammer-on every pitch via a left-hand slap, with no reliance on the plucking hand. In contrast, the other hand will underscore the exercise with an array of dead notes, composed with a range of techniques.

Example 2

Our second study once again envelops left hand slaps with a

EXAMPLE 1



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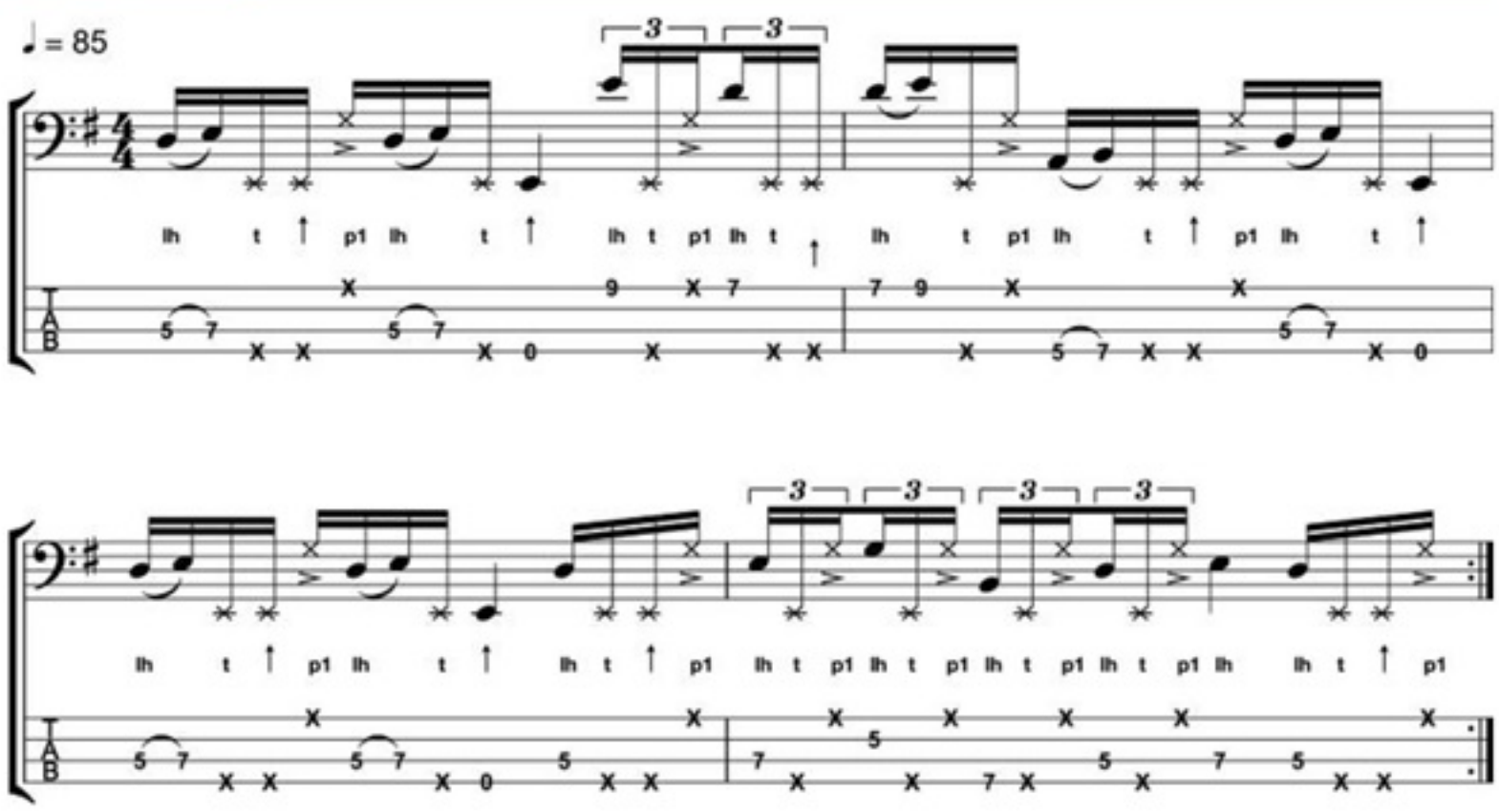


magnitude of dead notes. You'll immediately notice that this exercise introduces semiquaver triplets to the proceedings. Initially, cast your eye over the final beat of bar 1. Traditionally it's quite common to encounter semiquaver triplets executed with pitched, thumbed and then plucked movements. However, in this example you'll observe that the semiquaver triplet located on the final quaver of bar one has been produced via a combination of initially plucked notes and subsequent double thumbing.

Example 3

Example 3 references both of the preceding studies. On this occasion, try to be particularly sensitive to the subtle differences presented in articulation. For example, the first semiquaver on beat three of bar one has been plucked, whereas the fretting hand executes the first semiquaver of beat four. Double plucking also appears in bar two, requiring your index and middle fingers respectively to execute dual plucks of the muted G string.

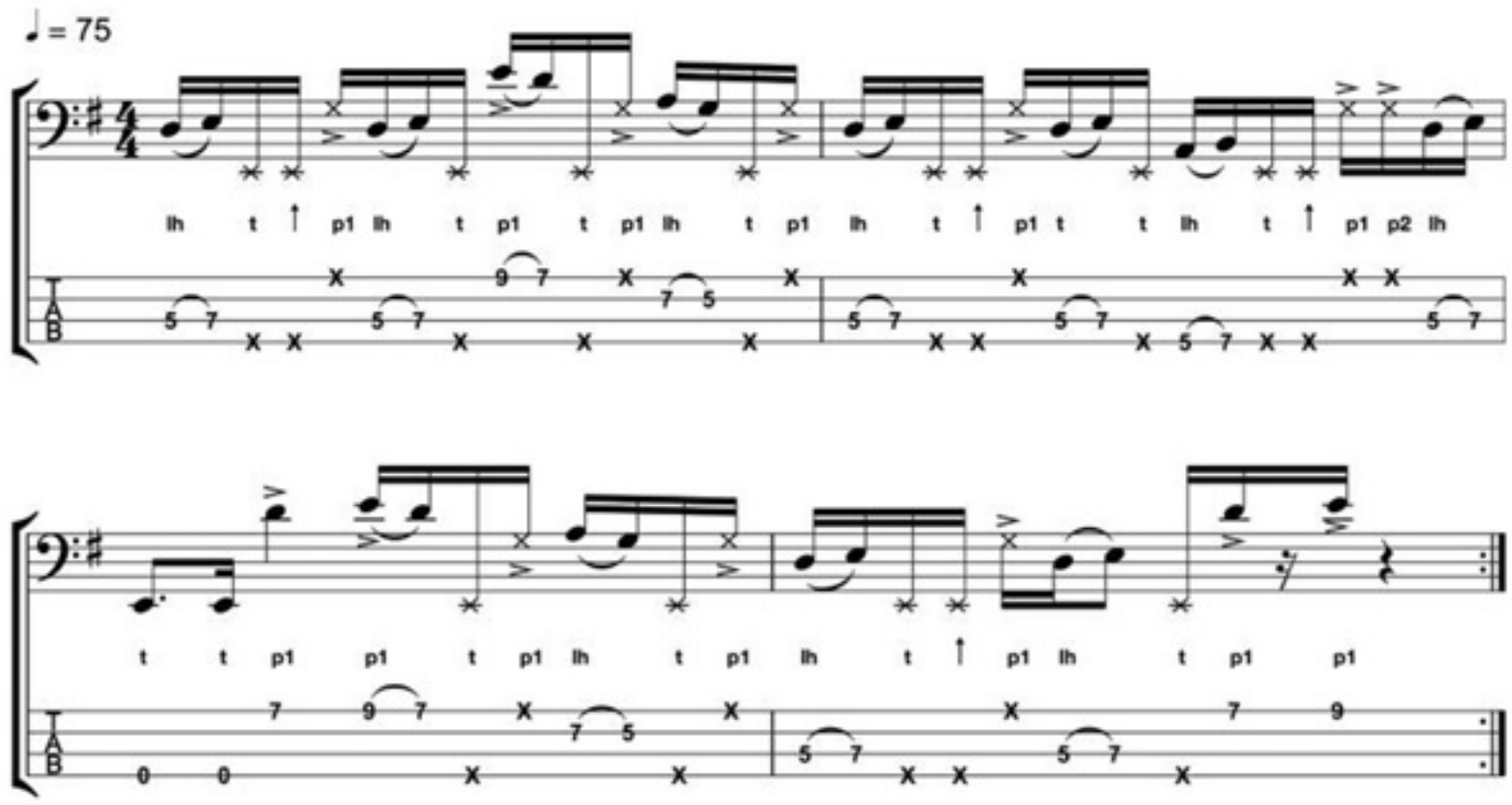
Example 4

One of the most challenging aspects of this month's fourth exercise resides in its final bar. It's actually quite straightforward to execute, with all of the notes falling comfortably beneath the digits of your fretting hand. Once again, in contrast to traditional methods, the left hand will be required to perform the conventionally fretted notes, while the right executes enveloping rhythmical information. One particularly taxing feature found in this example is the unconventional delivery of octaves, which are now produced via left-hand slaps, as opposed to traditional index finger plucks.

Example 5

One of the fantastic benefits of using the fretting hand as an independent source of melodic information is the freedom that it subsequently gives to the right. No longer required to assist the execution of notes in the fretting hand, the right hand now becomes free to explore an array of performance possibilities that could potentially enhance the initial melodic information. **Example 5** once again entertains a variety of semiquaver triplet patterns at the beginning of bars two and four. Use the fretting hand to execute the first note of each grouping, with the subsequent ghost notes being produced via a combination of right

EXAMPLE 3



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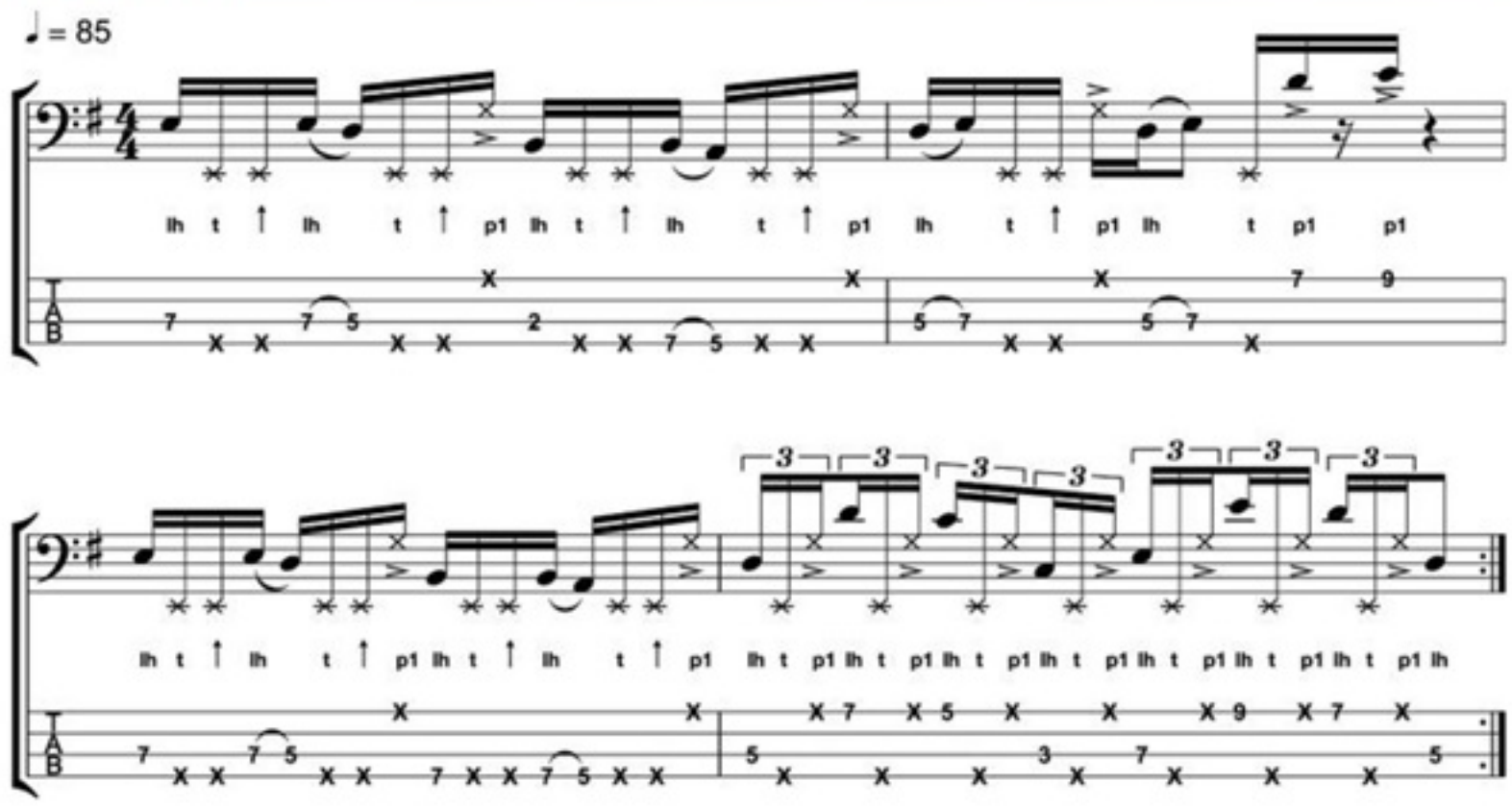


> "ONE OF THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECTS OF THIS MONTH'S FOURTH EXERCISE RESIDES IN ITS FINAL BAR. IT'S ACTUALLY QUITE STRAIGHTFORWARD TO EXECUTE, WITH ALL OF THE NOTES FALLING COMFORTABLY BENEATH THE DIGITS OF YOUR FRETTING HAND"

Phil at the London Bass Guitar Show

hand thumb and index finger movements.

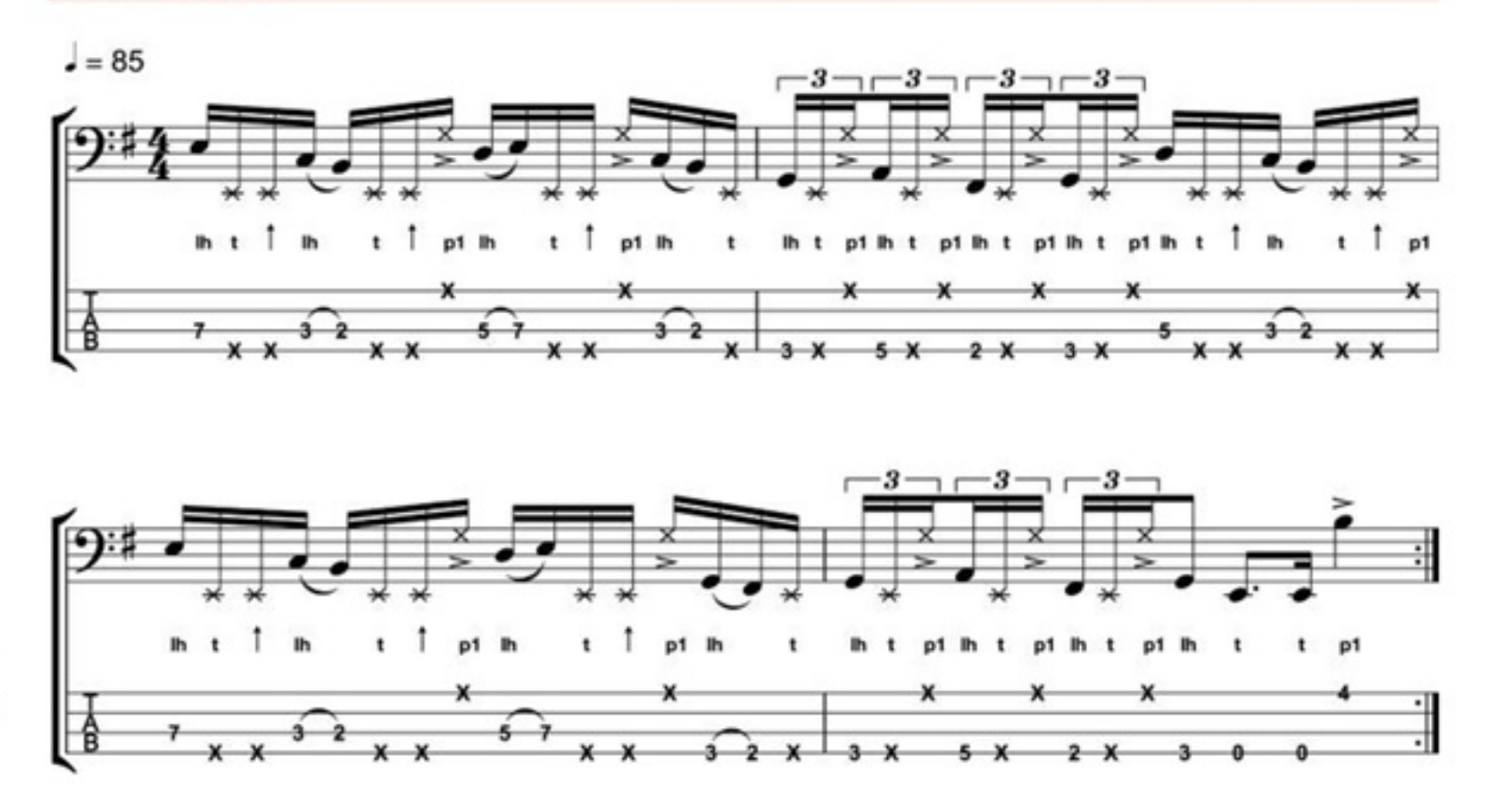
Example 6

Collating all of the information covered in this month's article so far, **Example 6** might initially feel disjointed unless attention to detail is maintained. The combination of blues notes, fretting hand slaps, pull-offs and semiquaver triplets might prove a little taxing, so take your time and don't be afraid to isolate any individual elements.

Example 7

Whereas in previous examples of semiquaver triplets, pitched notes are preceded by two subsequent dead notes, our penultimate exercise reverse-engineers this

EXAMPLE 5

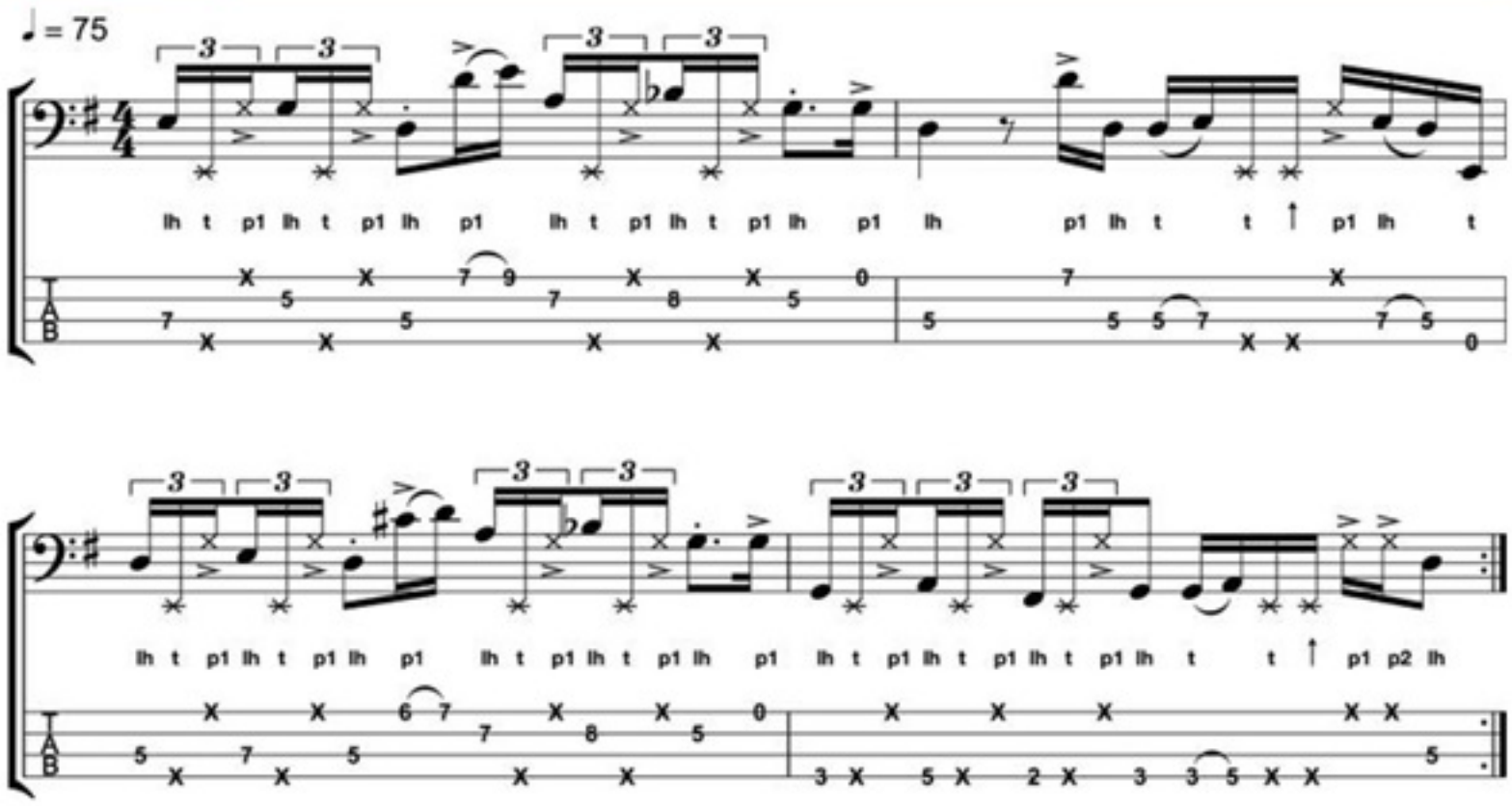


process, placing the dead notes in front of the aforementioned pitches. Slow, steady practice is the key to you achieving competence in the subsequent phrase here.

Example 8

Anyone who's read my books knows of my obsessive view of permutation studies. Embracing a different perspective opens an endless number of doors which lead to fresh technical insights that can further your practical ability. This month's final study exercises this frame of mind, taking a semiquaver triplet idea that's been consistent for the majority of this month's programme and suggesting an alternative permutation to its delivery. Until next time!

EXAMPLE 6



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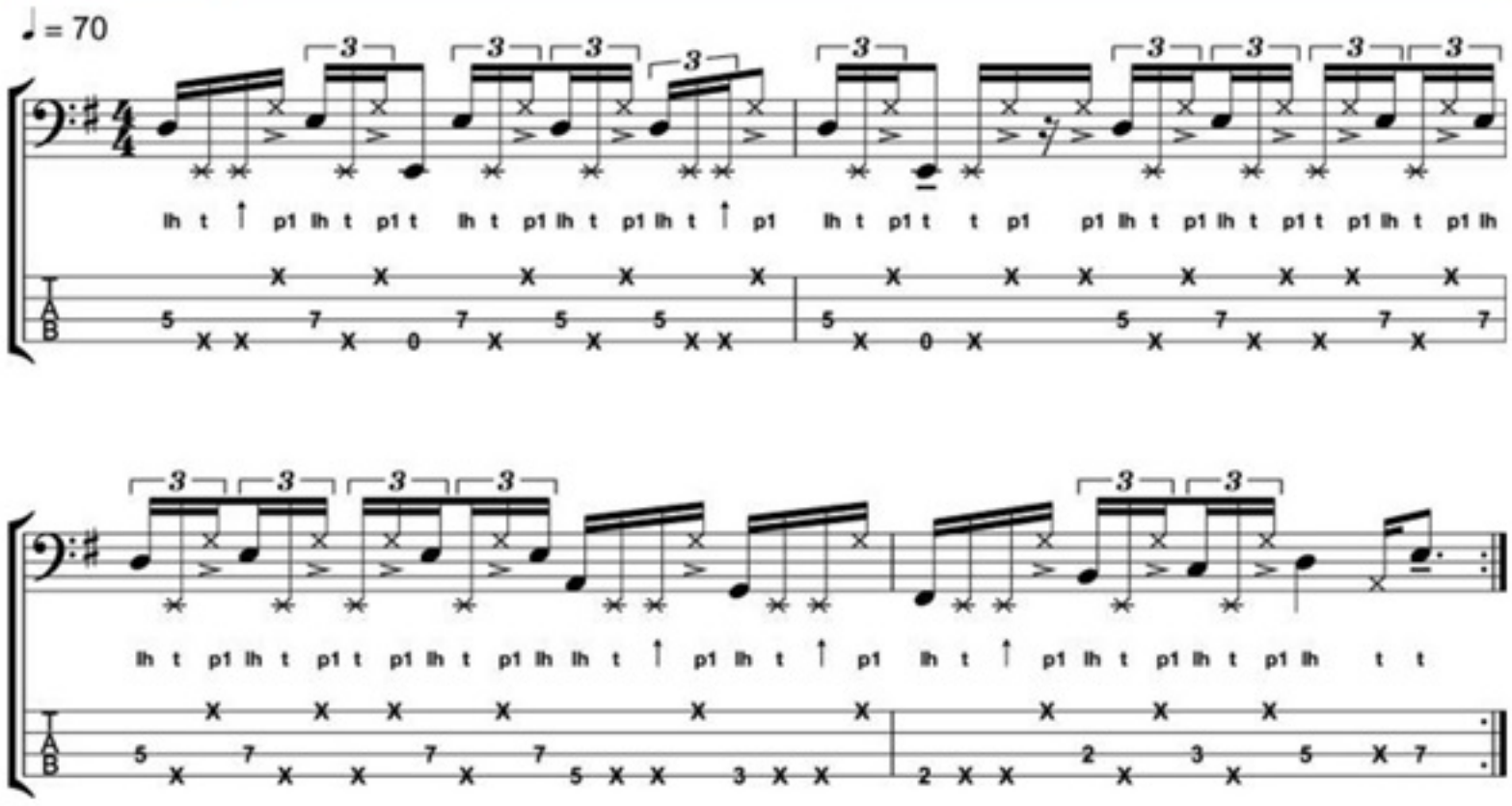

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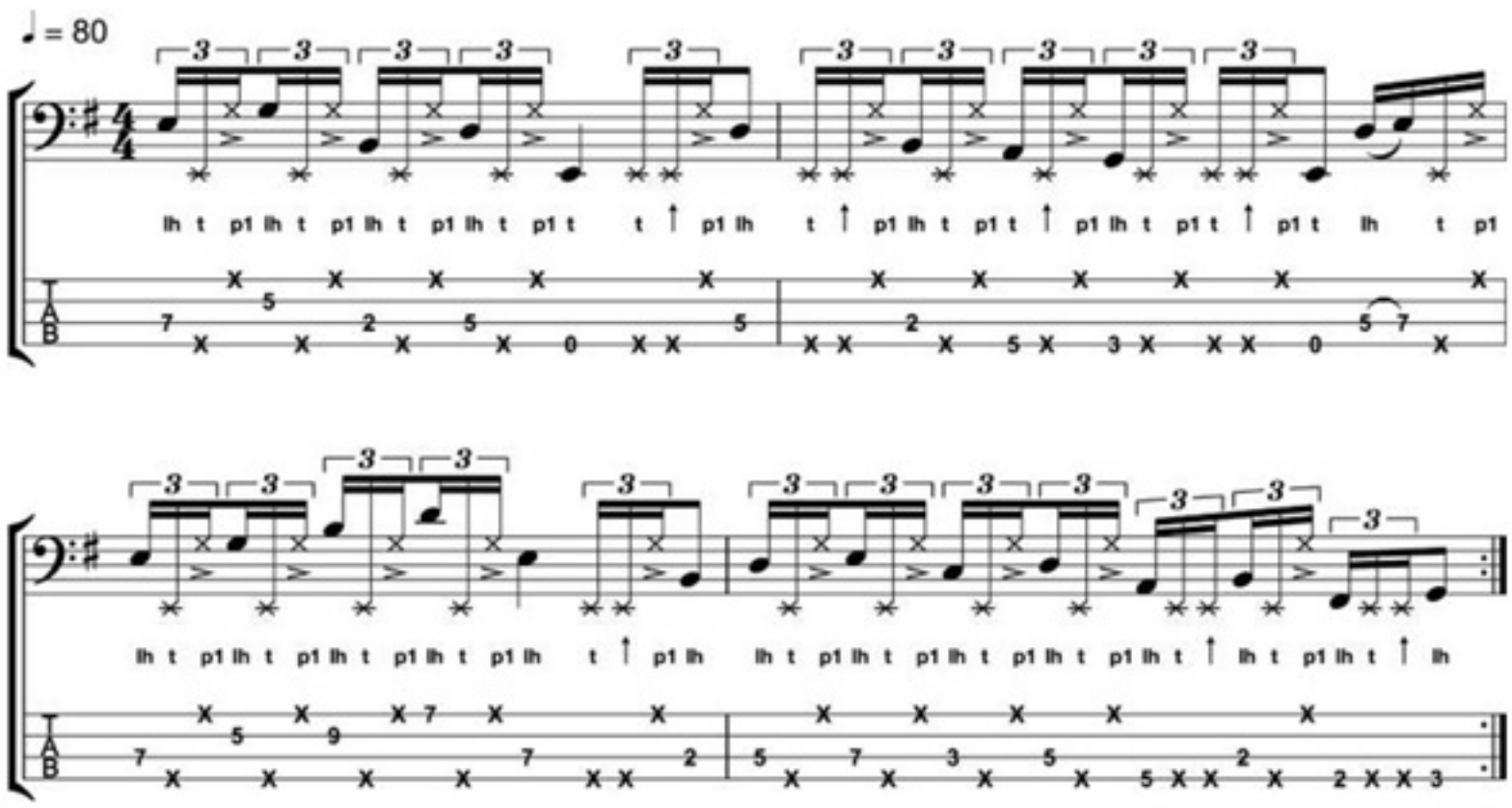

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Classic

BASS ALBUMS

Mike Brooks salutes the 1984 album *Purple Rain* and its late creator, Prince

Last month saw the release of a new Ultimate Collector's Edition of *Purple Rain*, a project overseen by Prince himself before his death. Featuring a remaster of the 33-year-old album, it also pulls together material previously unheard from this period in the great man's career, all of the single edits and B-sides from the project and a DVD of a live performance from the final stretch of dates on the *Purple Rain* US tour in 1984 and '85.

The album, along with the accompanying film, broke records the world over. The slow burn of Prince's previous five albums led up to this pinnacle, as it was then, in his career – the stars aligned, the timing was immaculate, and the album provided him with a platform to do whatever he wanted for the next eight years. Having sold over 25 million copies worldwide (add a few more now thanks to the new remaster), *Purple Rain* is ranked as the third best-selling soundtrack ever, spawning two US number one singles. The title track nestled at number two in America and the album itself reached number one.

Mark Brown, or Brown Mark to give him his stage name, is credited with bass on the album, but much has been written about how close his and Prince's bass styles were, making it difficult to work out who is playing what, both on this album and the others which feature Mark, from 1981 to '86. However, we do know that the basses include an Alembic Spoiler and the ubiquitous Fender Jazz, strung with roundwounds and recorded direct into the desk.

From the opening organ chords of 'Let's Go Crazy', you know you're in for a high-energy journey. Prince's unique drum and percussion sample sounds continue on from his work on *1999*, while the guitar solo finale is signature Prince. Always a live favourite, no matter where he placed it in the set, the song is one of the so-called 'millstone' tracks as he liked to call them, alongside 'When Doves Cry' and 'Purple Rain' itself.

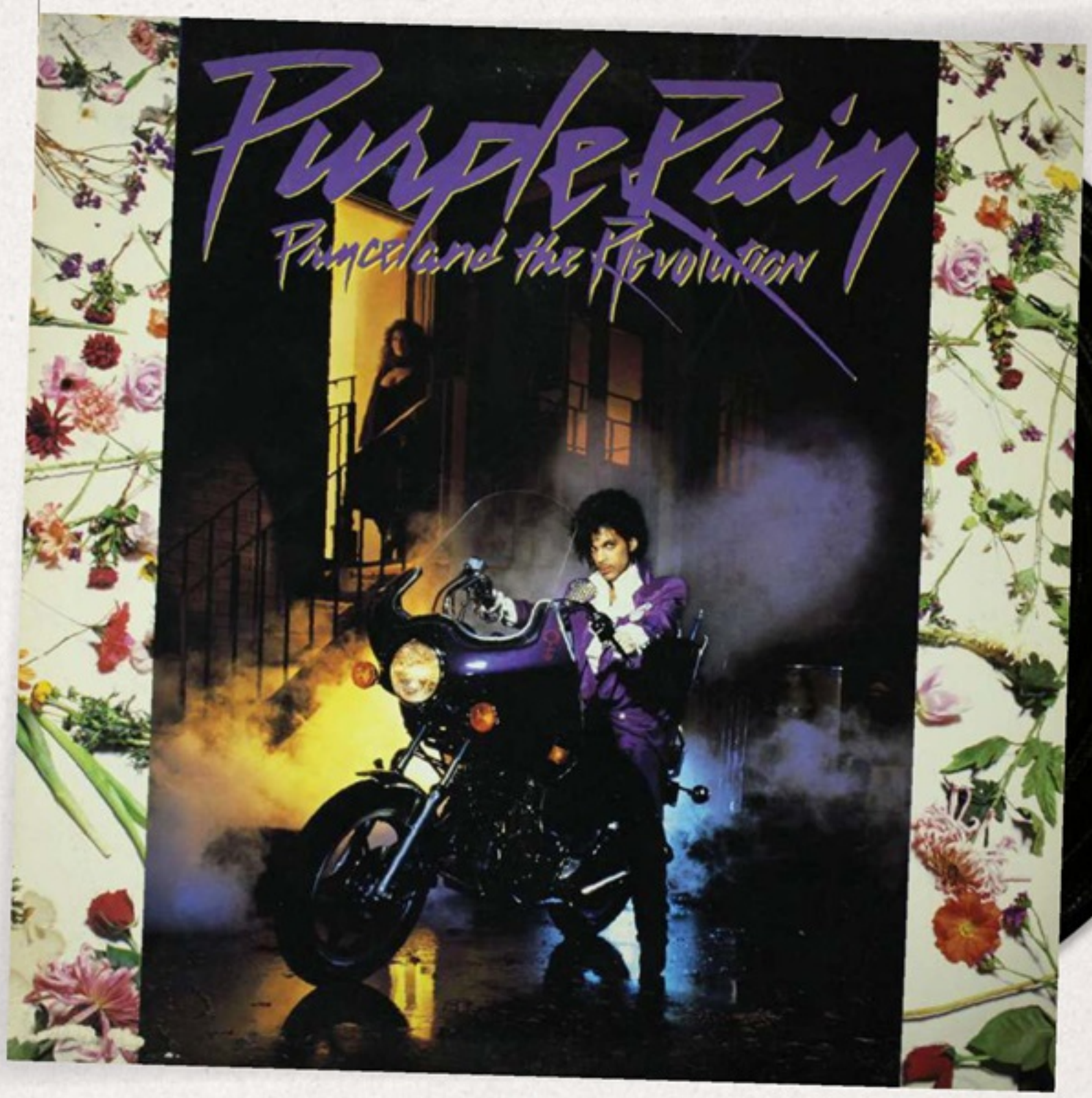
Tracks such as 'Take Me With You' and 'The Beautiful Ones' illustrate a noticeable change in writing style compared to material on previous albums. Gone are the funk-laden groove numbers, which meant fewer bass treasures for us: in came more mature songs that fitted the mood of the film perfectly and showed the progression and depth of Prince's songwriting. Add to that his guitar playing skills and his ability to write and oversee the whole band's performance, and it's no surprise that bass guitar virtuosity and the dance element of his material took a back seat for this album.

'Darling Nikki' is an oddity, with an extremely sparse, almost non-existent bass-line, with keyboards handling most of the low-end duties, which leads nicely onto the first single, 'When Doves Cry' – proof if any were needed that a great song doesn't have to have a bass-line. An unreleased version of the song with bass does exist, and live, there was always a bass part to give the song weight and power.

'I Would Die 4 U' and 'Baby I'm A Star' are good examples of Prince's use of keyboards and sampled sounds. Both tracks have bass guitar lines working alongside keyboard lines. Guitar is kept to a minimum but both tracks maintain their momentum, and many signature Prince sounds, parts and 'feels' are clearly evident.

The title track lasts for almost nine minutes and will perhaps be remembered as Prince's most famous song. A prime cut if ever there was one – and a fitting end to an album that stuck a marker in the sand saying, 'I have arrived'. RIP.

"THE STARS ALIGNED, THE TIMING WAS IMMACULATE, AND THE ALBUM PROVIDED PRINCE WITH A PLATFORM TO DO WHATEVER HE WANTED FOR THE NEXT EIGHT YEARS"



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